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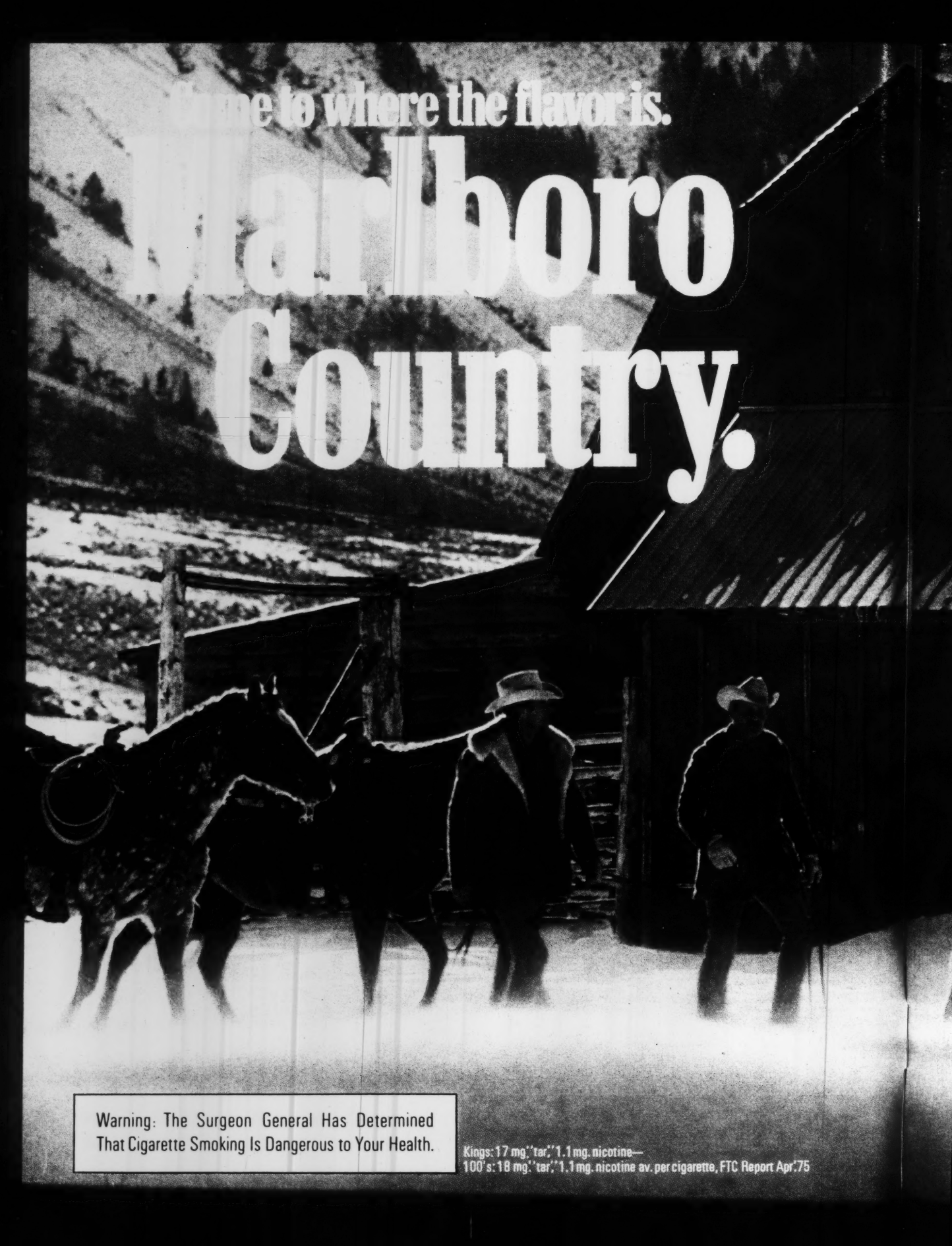

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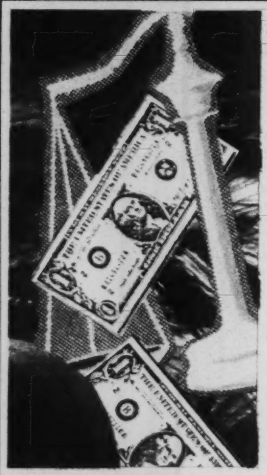

TOP OF THE NEWS

Against the American grain

The White House, the CIA, the FBI. . .the scandals keep coming, and now they've trickled all the way down to the American bread box. Thanks to a few honest men in the Agriculture Department, taxpayers are now learning what foreign grain buyers have suspected for years—America's number one export is blighted by corruption.

By Stephen Diamond with Stephen Armbruster

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THESE ARE NEW TIMES

The War in the bedroom

Americans have been out of the trenches for years, but the wounds of the Vietnam War refuse to heal. Many of the men who made it home are surviving with broken bodies, broken dreams or both. And the women who welcomed them back are trying hard to pick up the pieces.

By Corinne Browne

Page 32

THESE ARE NEW TIMES

Beggars' banquet

Everybody knows that the education boom has gotten out of hand, but few realize the extent: An enterprising former band instructor is making a mint teaching the out-of-luck the best ways to beg. Omar doesn't think his work is despicable: "Our whole society is based on give and take."

By Sonny Kleinfield

Page 42

THE ARTS

Soap gets in your eyes

The television season has now been critiqued, rated and dismissed. But what about commercials? Our critic takes a look at the TV messages that really count.

By Ron Rosenbaum

Page 50

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Page 23-Mike O'Meara

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ARKY & BARRETT

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Reviews:

Music: Rolling Thunder Revue. Bob Dylan seems to be trying to convince us that he's just plain folks. Question is, will anyone believe him?

By Janet Maslin

Page 57

Books: *King of the Gypsies.* Gypsies can gull anyone—as author Peter Maas discovers.

By Geoffrey Wolff

Page 62

Movies: *Distant Thunder.* Director Satyajit Ray, in a film of extraordinary eloquence, explores a world wrenched by man-made famine.

By Nik Cohn

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Final Tribute

Kristallnacht for the U.N.

By Mark Goodman

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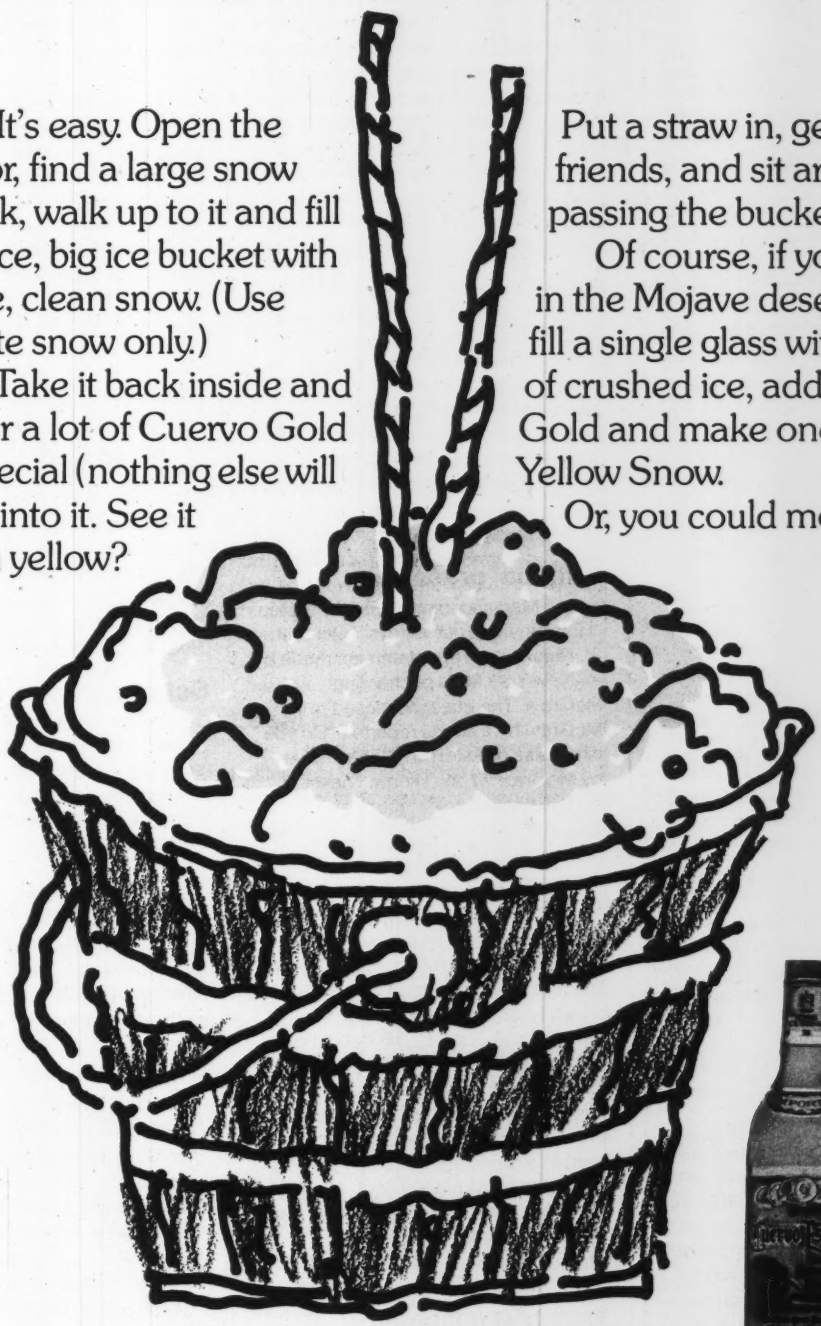

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Letters

Babbling back

Like, that R.D. Rosen ("Psychobabble," October 31) is one really together person. Anyone can see that he doesn't let other people's noise get inside his head. He is both verbal and heavy.

Bob McClellan
Hobart, Indiana

Please spare us from crap like R.D. Rosen's article. He, like most people, is so insecure that he prefers to live behind facades and games. That is his right. The galling thing is his lengthy moralizing to try to justify his fear and paranoia. The new, nonclinical use of the word *paranoia* satisfies an important linguistic need. Many people are aware that some of their fears are not well grounded in reality. I submit that *paranoia* is as good a word as any to describe those particular fears.

Don E. Green
Sacramento, California

I studied psychology as an undergraduate about the time when "sensitivity" was becoming a fad. Luckily, I escaped the full brunt of "getting in touch with my feelings," but in recent years I have noticed people's compulsion to discuss intimate matters with relative strangers in the terms your author describes as "psychobabble." When I declined to participate, I was pitied for being too inhibited. Thanks for letting me know I'm not the only one who thought it was a con game.

Marie Janiewski
Tallahassee, Florida

Mr. Rosen's sophomoric treatment of today's desperate attempt at communication is clever and slick, if somewhat inaccurate and laughably lacking in insight. Apparently, he would like us all to sit in a closet with bags over our heads and refuse to communicate with anyone unless we can do so by our own nearsighted and narrow standards of intelligent conversation. The fact that "Psychobabble has insinuated itself into the art forms" would lead one to believe that, as in the past, art forms generally pave the way to greater understanding and act as a catalyst to change and progress. Progress, not psychobabble, might be a better cover story.

Linda Powell
New York City

Various elements of the media have always created labels to counter what they neither understand nor could control. There has been a succession of "beatniks," "hippies," "the counterculture," "freaks," "groupies," ad nauseam. . . and now there is "psychobabble" added to the legions of put-downs that never stopped evolutionary change.

Robert P. Kunst
Miami, Florida

Artificial grass

Mark Goodman's Final Tribute, "How vinyl are our valleys" (October 3), reminds me of a statement made by ex-New York Mets pitcher Tug McGraw. The question, posed to McGraw by a sports reporter: "Do you like grass or AstroTurf?" The answer by McGraw: "I don't know. I never smoked AstroTurf!"

Gerald T. Holmes
Jamestown, New York

The piece on the artificial playing surfaces found in most major stadiums around the country was excellent, except for two factual errors. The first college football game played on artificial grass was not played at Knoxville on Sept. 14, 1968, but nearly a year earlier, when Indiana State introduced AstroTurf to the outside world (it had been developed for use in the Astrodome and its sun-blocking roof) in a game against Eastern Illinois. That game was played Sept. 16, 1967. AstroTurf, therefore, begat Tartan Turf, and not the other way around.

Carl L. Bender
Terre Haute, Indiana

Mystical militancy

Your article by Wayne Slater on the coal-miner wildcat strike ("Sticking to the union," October 3) ridiculed the miners he was describing, provided a rather mystical interpretation of coal-miner history and was an apotheosis of Skip Delano and a movement that represents a trend always disastrous to workers everywhere. Militancy is important; it will never be lacking in coal fields. But militant action without a thorough analysis of possible consequences invites annihilation.

If West Virginia coal miners chance to read the Slater article, they may be amazed to learn of their "divine psyche." I believe I knew my late father better than any other man now living, and I assure you he would be most amused to learn that he ever became "The Incarnation." Wildcat invocation of Blair Mountain was simply an inflammatory tactic; Delano and his men would not have received Bill Blizzard's blessing, and no doubt knew it.

William C. Blizzard
Beckley, West Virginia

Scheer pleasure

The timely addition of Robert Scheer as political columnist in your second anniversary issue (October 17) is a fine way to say "Happy Birthday" to your readers.

Barbara Kingsbury
New York City

Reporting Mr. Goodbar

Lacey Fosburgh's "Finding Mr. Goodbar" (October 17) was one of the most brilliant pieces of reporting and writing I have read.

F.P. Seitel
Cliffside Park, New Jersey

I have just finished reading "Finding Mr. Goodbar" and am feeling increasingly disgusted with your exploitation of violence and despair. Whom does such an article help? Certainly not the parents of Roseann Quinn, or the parents of John Wayne Wilson, or the vast numbers of lonely single people living in New York. There was an appalling emphasis on inevitability and fatalism in Ms. Fosburgh's article, and I cannot feel that anyone could have been either

enlightened, encouraged or educated in self-determination by the tone of the article.

Joyce G. Young
Santa Monica, California

Birth control

As a volunteer social worker for the Planned Parenthood Association, I was outraged to read your report on the contraceptive power of lactation (Insider, October 17). Although your statistics do show a correlation between nursing and a low occasion of pregnancy, nursing should not be considered a form of birth control. Despite a strict adherence to a nursing schedule, there is still a high failure rate for this supposed method.

Kathleen J. Dombrink
St. Louis, Missouri

Back pat

Congratulations on your second anniversary (October 17). I am glad you have kept your editorial pen from slashing apart honest thoughts that bring some reality to our new times.

David Tremaine
Lake Stevens, Washington

Bombing the bird

Oliver Moore's article on the B-1 bomber ("It's a Bird . . . It's a Plane . . . No! It's Superblunder!" October 17) is an example of the kind of reporting we desperately need. But it is unfortunate that he failed to mention the existence of a large, nationwide grass-roots movement against the B-1, sponsored primarily by the American Friends Service Committee and the Clergy and Laity Concerned. Information about the Stop the B-1 Bomber: National Peace Conversion Campaign is available from 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Robert R. Read
Somerville, Mass.

Generation gap

In the Insider (November 14), you refer to Frances Fitzgerald Lanahan Smith as F. Scott Fitzgerald's granddaughter. Actually, she is his daughter.

Bill Buchanan
Nashville, Tennessee

Busing the poor

Contrary to Larry King (Fulminations, October 3), what we *do* have here in Boston is a sociological experiment whose primary aim is not to give black kids access to superior schools but to "cure" lower-income white kids of "racism." Indeed, Mr. King suggests as much himself at the end of his column, when he says, "Leave [the kids] alone, and hope that the racist fears we've planted in our kids will be dissipated by their new—if uneasy—associations." How could it be more clear what this is really all about? One of the reasons why Boston's lower-income whites are so enraged at being made the objects of this social experiment is that it is not being extended into the suburbs, and for the very good reason that the suburban whites have the political clout to resist it and (should that fail) the money to escape it. The urban whites say, in effect, and with great justice, "How come it's only *our* kids who have to be cured of racism, why not those rich kids too?" To this question there is no good answer.

John Holt
Boston, Massachusetts

Fascinating who?

Really now, someone's being rather unreal ("Peddling the pedestal," October 17). Are matching mother-daughter outfits and new refrigerators what these women want? No thank you. I do believe I can be a complete woman without being a complete fool.

Chris Flores
Chicago, Illinois

Legal fees

I read with great concern your Postscript (November 14) on Scott Camil. While he was rightly acquitted, we must ask the question: Has Scott Camil been spared the punishment of the law? The answer is no. The government has forced Mr. Camil to pay a high price to prove his innocence: He has been driven deeply into debt by the cost of his legal defense. I have introduced legislation—H.R. 6296—that would provide for the payment of reasonable attorney's fees and other costs of the accused where the ultimate disposition in a federal criminal trial is other than a conviction.

Edward I. Koch
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Keep on truckin'

A typographical error in the November 28 Final Tribute produced the statement that James Hoffa sent "25 million truckers" rolling across America. The correct figure is 2.5 million.

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Hit 'em a lick

Fulminations

By Larry L. King

Some weeks ago the Supreme Court ruled it permissible for teachers to award corporal punishments to misbehaving schoolchildren. The most obvious comment is that while the Warren Court for almost 20 years dealt in the expansion of personal freedoms, the Burger Court is satisfied to recommend thumpings for the young.

As a former schoolboy rowdy who himself was bent over numerous desks for applications of the hickory stick, I am torn between wishing the same opportunities for my spiritual successors and a conflicting notion that perhaps little is gained by the beating of children—no matter how much fun it may be for adults. I suppose few injustices occurred when

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

various teachers whacked me for crimes ranging from smoking on the school grounds to circulating certain underground "comic" books depicting Maggie doing interesting things to Jiggs. There was one fellow, however—and it may not surprise you to know he was a football coach—who so seemed to get his jollies while thumping the young that he prowled the school building looking for chewers of gum or whisperers in study hall. Years later I actually looked him up with the idea of giving him some of his own medicine, only to make the shocking discovery that he—as well as I—had aged. There being only minor satisfactions in the caning of 70-year-old men, I bought him a drink and asked why he'd been such a terror with the stick. Not surprisingly, he claimed he'd only done it "for the good of the kids." I think we both knew better, however, and I noticed that the old man had trouble looking me in the eye.

It may be, today, that schoolchildren have fewer worries about being abused by teachers than the other way around. From what I hear of schools that must post uniformed policemen in the halls to keep minimal order, I, personally, would not want to advance on extreme schoolboy rowdies even with a club in my hand. Clubs aren't very effective against knives or guns.

To turn the arguments of the female liberationists against them, it was my experience that the spanking of schoolchildren had a definite sexist tinge. Hairy-legged boys were considered prime targets of opportunity, while the young girl who felt the lash was as rare as the swimming stone. Caught at even the most heinous crimes, the Mary Anns or the Linda Lous avoided corporal punishments by batting their baby blue eyes until they managed to make them overflow. On the extremely rare occasion when their little girl wiles failed to abort justice—and I recall only two instances in history—every female student in school rallied 'round. The girls would weep and moan and gnash their teeth in a body, in protest of the punishment of their sister, sounding like a convention of witches. Some refused to eat their lunches. This so shattered faculty morale that no girl would be touched for seven years unless she robbed a bank.

Boys, of course, were not permitted to snivel and whine. The *macho* code prevented this. Boys had to suck it up and take their punishments while pretending to be unhurt. Never mind that your teeth had been jarred, your butt was on fire and your humiliation complete; you were required to return to your classroom swaggering and smirking by way of proving your degree of tough. Aware of the game, certain prideful teachers exerted themselves in an effort to break the will of their targets as much as to render fair discipline. I learned, incidentally—with the exception of the aforementioned football coach—that women teachers swung from the heels more readily than did most male instructors.

I am not sure paddling was all that good for us; adults are careless in considering the dignity of the young, and possibly their flailings plant more resentments than are cured. On the other hand, except in the case of incorrigibles, there probably were certain preventative qualities attached to fear of the lash. One who retained the memory of recent stingings might be less prone to follow one's looser whims, even if only for a few days.

I see I have not made it perfectly clear how I feel about the Supreme Court ruling, but on the general question I simply have not found a pat solution. This much, however, I *do* know: If we're going to insist on corporal punishments in the schools, I am enthusiastic about thumping a higher percentage of girls. Let us adopt as our slogan the blood cry that the gentle Mary Anns and Linda Lous sent up from the sidelines during our football games: *Hit 'em a lick/Hit 'em a lick/Harder/Harder.* . . . ●

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Does the Mafia run America?

The Ruling Class

By Robert Scheer

A good part of the popular mythology of power in America centers on the existence of a national Mafia. This invisible criminal conglomerate is supposed to control many otherwise legitimate big businesses and even high government officials. Who's to blame for the nation's ills? The Mafia. This use of the Mafia as a scapegoat is obviously convenient for those who *do* possess real power. But there is very little hard evidence to support such an inflated view of the Mafia's role.

Certainly there exist syndicates of racketeers who do quite well for themselves. They have major influence in the Nevada gambling community, control the drug trade and recently have muscled into the porno industry. And it's true that they've laundered a lot of their illicit profits to invest in their legitimate businesses. But they are chicken-feed businesses—small-time banks, hotels, etc. There is no serious evidence of Mafia control of even one major American corporation.

Proponents of the Mafia-control thesis frequently point a finger at Pepsico, the multinational conglomerate that produces Pepsi-Cola, Frito-Lay potato chips and Wilson sporting goods. Some Mafia researchers claim that Pepsico is involved with the mob in smuggling heroin from Southeast Asia and that many of their franchises are merely gangster fronts. These charges simply could not be true.

The modern corporate bureaucracy is a poor vehicle for clandestine criminal activity. For it to prosper, its employees must work with an enthusiasm born of a belief in the morality of the company and the value of its product. Pepsi execs believe that drinking Pepsi is a wonderful thing to do, regardless of its nutritional value. It is a legal product sold on the market to "free" consumers and hence it is legitimate and good, even though it rots teeth. If the product were declared illegal, those same execs would become horribly confused about the purpose of their lives, and certainly a few of them would spill the beans.

What I do find scary about Pepsico is that its *legal* activity is so damnable. The major anticipated growth area for that company lies in the creation of an international snack-food industry. Company execs who would feel terribly corrupt if they were dealing in illicit drugs feel no qualms whatsoever about pushing vitaminless potato chips and sugar water to a world that is, in significant part, starving. They work their hardest to get kids in Nairobi to plunk down a quarter for Pepsi instead of powdered milk because it makes business sense, sugar water being cheaper to produce and hence more profitable. What the Mafia and the large corporations have in common is not an interlocking directorate but rather a mental set tied to making profit and to the growth of their respective businesses. It's just that the illegal business of the Mafia is bush league compared to the far more stable, profitable and powerful legal rackets that form the American economy.

Since I'm not very expert on the Mafia, I raised these issues with Francis Ford Coppola, the director of *The Godfather I* and *II*, who in the course of making those movies read widely on the subject. Since the *Godfather* movies have done much to increase the popularity of the Mafia scapegoat theory, it was interesting to discover that Coppola himself was using the Mafia as a metaphor rather than a reality. He put it this way:

"I don't believe that the Mafia exists. It certainly doesn't exist as a secret organization. The Mafia is the big corporations, it's a way of thinking. The hoodlums that made up the real so-called Mafia were the jokers and the pawns of a mentality that is true of the whole country and certainly of the corporations. But there are not thirty powerful Italian families that meet together and are really calling the shots."

Coppola feels that people have tended to ignore the significance of the boardroom scene in *Godfather II*. That episode, which took place in pre-revolution Havana, attempted to depict the mob as junior partners in the management of colonized Cuba—junior to the heavies from United Fruit and ITT. The point was that if not for the legitimate corporations' control over Cuba, the racketeers would not have had a chance. Which has certainly turned out to be true in Castro's Cuba.

The real danger of the Mafia scapegoat theory is that it draws attention from the actual workings of power in America, thus fueling the false hope that eliminating some rather petty characters will solve our problems. To quote Coppola again:

"The secret underground society idea is an easy way to say, 'Oh, the problem is over there. If we can just get those thirty guys with the machine guns, everything is all right.' We know that's not true."

One irony in all this is that the FBI, which originally spawned and nurtured the idea of the Mafia as America's real menace, became itself a unit of organized crime. J. Edgar Hoover used fear of organized crime to supplement fear of foreign communist subversion as the means of building his empire. Eventually, the FBI itself became an invisible, illegal government. Unlike the power of the mob, the FBI's power was frighteningly real. Recent revelations of FBI blackmailing of Martin Luther King expose a skillful and imaginative viciousness well beyond the reach of ordinary hoodlums.

One of the gentlemen at the FBI responsible for such activities was Cartha Dekle DeLoach, J. Edgar's number three man for some 20 years. Cartha is now happily ensconced as a vice-president for corporate affairs at none other than Pepsico. I mention this not in the hopes of feeding further conspiracy theories but merely to indicate that the skills most often attributed to the mob (and which were developed to a higher form at the FBI) seem to find their fullest flowering in the legit corporate world. ●

Are *Penthouse* letters real?
Knuckle-cracking as preventive medicine

The Insider

EDITED BY TONY SCHWARTZ

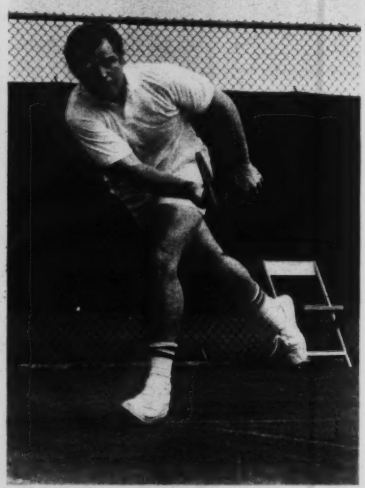
Politics

Chasing shadows

The organization is yet another testament to Ted Kennedy's unique attractiveness as the Democratic candidate for president. Ignoring the party's nine announced candidates, a group of prominent conservatives are taking aim at Kennedy, despite his repeated statements that he will not run. "Citizens Against Kennedy" includes officials of the American Conservative Union and the Young Americans for Freedom. The group believes that the 42-year-old Massachusetts senator has devised a scenario in which all the announced candidates divide the primary delegates, thus assuring a deadlocked Democratic convention and a draft-Kennedy ground swell.

A recent mass mailing by the "Citizens" is aimed at raising money to place anti-Kennedy ads. It begins: "Those of us who have been watching presidential politics for years are convinced that unless someone spoils his cover of non-candidacy and gives him the exposure he is trying hard to avoid, Kennedy will be the Democrats' 1976 candidate for President of the United States." And lest anyone misunderstand the implications of a Kennedy presidency, the letter spells out the group's view bluntly: "The election of Ted Kennedy would mean the end of our society as we have known it. We are convinced that the consequences could be tragic for the United States. . . ."

J.P. LAFFONT/SYGMA



Kennedy: non-candidate who could

The powers that be

The nuclear industry is quietly but forcefully fighting back. In California, where nuclear opponents successfully placed a power plant moratorium initiative on the 1976 ballot, "Citizens for Jobs and Energy" (CJE) has been formed to mobilize sentiment against it. CJE is led by former California Governor Pat Brown, a nuclear sympathizer and father of that state's current governor, Jerry Brown. Funding for CJE comes primarily from Bechtel Corporation, one of the nation's largest contractors for power plant construction.

The more elaborately organized "Americans for Energy Independence" (AEI) also sounds like a citizens' group. In fact, funding for the Washington-based organization, now at about $200,000, comes largely from General Electric and Westinghouse, two major nuclear designers, and from investor-owned utilities, including Consolidated Edison in New York.

Rogers and out. . .and in

Ever since President Ford's Halloween massacre, observers have been wondering what's in store for Rogers C.B. Morton, whose planned resignation as secretary of commerce was hastened by the shake-up. Beginning in February, our source reports, Morton will become counselor to the President. It had even been rumored that the onetime GOP national chairman might replace the faltering Bo Callaway as director of Ford's campaign. However, Morton, according to our source, prefers to "be removed from the rough and tumble of a presidential campaign." Instead, he will act as a major political adviser to Ford at the White House and will have, in the words of our source, "complete access."

WIDE WORLD

Morton: inside move

Secret disservice

The Secret Service practice of checking out "undesirables" in the cities that President Ford intends to visit may not uncover assassins, but it can turn lives upside down. Until recently, Philip Ames was a *New Orleans Times-Picayune* photographer. To his subsequent surprise, he learned that he was also on a Secret Service list of individuals potentially dangerous to the President.

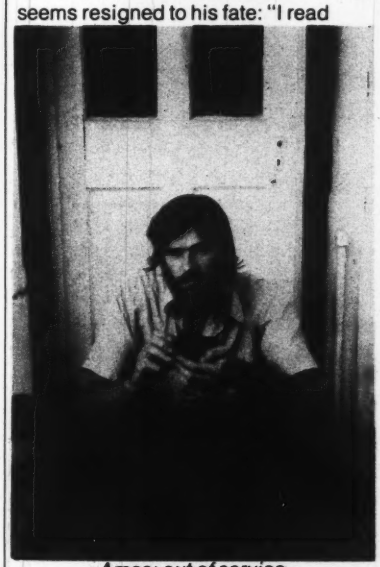
In 1968 Ames was arrested, convicted and sentenced to 16 years in a Mexican jail on a series of trumped up political charges including sedition, inciting rebellion and criminal association. He languished in prison until a Mike Wallace *60 Minutes* film report on Ames put pressure on the State Department to intervene on the young man's behalf. In 1971 the attorney general's office in Mexico ordered Ames' release, admitting that the charges against him had no basis and should be dropped.

When Ames returned to the

U.S., he was hired by the *Times-Picayune* and subsequently won the Associated Press' statewide Best News Picture award for two consecutive years.

Earlier this fall, Ford traveled to New Orleans. Ames' request for press credentials was denied by the Secret Service without explanation, and he let the matter drop. On the morning of the presidential visit, however, Ames was followed by the Secret Service as he drove to work. The tail lost him in traffic and the agents apparently panicked. One of them called an editor at the paper and reported that Ames was a convicted felon considered dangerous to the President. The paper eventually used the fact that Ames had lied on his job application as a major reason to fire him. The photographer says he didn't mention the felony simply because the charges had been dropped.

Since then, Ames claims that a number of newspapers have told him they would like to offer him a job but cannot until his name is removed from the Secret Service list. For now the 25-year-old photographer, who recently left New Orleans with his wife, seems resigned to his fate: "I read



Ames: out of service

about John Henry Faulk getting blacklisted. He won his case but never got his job back. I feel like I'm experiencing the same thing."

Unusually convivial

The subject has been one reporters traditionally avoid. If any reference at all is made to politicians who show the effects of drinking, it is usually done in mysteriously couched terms—"The senator seemed unusually convivial," for instance. In that context, *Newsweek*'s November 24 reference to President Ford's drinking habits seemed a bit more bold, even though it was buried deep in the story and was phrased discreetly: Ford "enjoys a pre-prandial drink with the boys, like any politician on the road, and occasionally shows it in his post-prandial speeches." There were no details.

Ford's problem arises, according to one of our correspondents who travels with him regularly, after the President attends several fund-raising receptions. Cocktails are served at each one, and later in the evening Ford has to make his featured speech. Our correspondent notes three examples that had reporters talking:

—In Newport, Rhode Island, last summer, Ford rambled on at nearly twice his normal length following a Republican dinner. At times, says our correspondent, his remarks were nearly incoherent.

—In Chicago recently Ford blurted out a promise to visit every state in the union by the end of the year. Surprised aides—perhaps remembering Nixon's disastrous similar vow in 1960—quickly modified the President's remarks.

—In Boston more recently Ford surprised even his closest aides by announcing at the third and last reception of the evening that he intended to enter every Republican presidential primary next year. Press secretary Ron Nessen softened the statement the next day, announcing that Ford would not campaign in all the primary states.

The also-rans

As if the presidential field weren't crowded enough, we've now come across a trio of candidates who make Fred Harris, Lloyd Bentsen and company look like sure bets. First there is Stanley Arnold, a business consultant who ran an abortive campaign for the vice-presidency in 1972. Arnold, the co-founder of a supermarket chain, announced recently at New York's Waldorf Astoria that this time he's after the big enchilada. He'll be campaigning, appropriately enough, on the slogan "I am not a politician." Arnold's proposals defy any hard ideological characterization, but they include guaranteeing jobs, taking physically able people off welfare, slicing the defense budget and reestablishing price restraints.

Then there is George Roden, a 37-year-old minister from Waco, Texas, currently living on welfare. He has been appearing regularly at Democratic forums and fund-raisers and vows to stay on welfare if elected.

Arnold: I am not a politician

"The country needs a man who wears a wedding band and doesn't smoke or drink," says Roden. "I'm that man."

The third candidate is easily the most interesting and perhaps the most unlikely. Speaking recently at American University, journalist Hunter S. Thompson said that he may take a shot at the presidency, although it's not clear whether or not he'd run on a Democratic ticket. Thompson, who lives in Woody Creek, Colorado, once ran and narrowly lost in a race for sheriff of Aspen. If elected, Thompson promises to initiate a "dual surrogate" presidency. That means, he explained, that Ralph Nader will be the solicitor and Frank Mankiewicz will act as barrister to confuse Nader.

Seventies

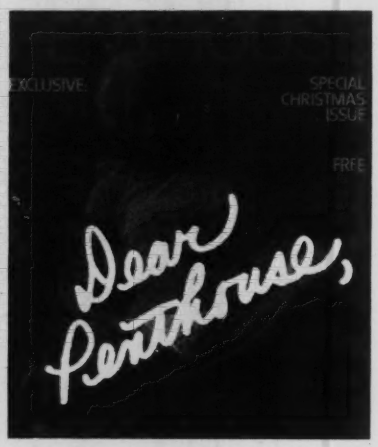
Writing fantasy

For months now, and with undiminished fascination, we've been reading the slew of sexually explicit reader confessionals printed in *Penthouse* magazine's "Forum." It isn't easy to find new thrills in the glutted skin-magazine field, and this form of verbal titillation is the most novel one we've yet discovered.

But then, of course, there's the obvious question: Are the letters real?

Not long ago, we sent correspondent Charlie Stein over to *Penthouse* to find out. After rummaging through piles and piles of letters, he returned bleary-eyed with this report:

"They're real all right—in pink and white and yellow and blue envelopes, with postmarks from all over the country, on stationery engraved, for example, with artfully designed penises. They print up to 10,000 words of letters each month, and that doesn't even reflect one day's take—anywhere from 75 to 100 graphic descriptions of sex with



animals, vacuum cleaners, water pics, enemas, typewriters and cucumbers; of group sex, masturbation and instant sex with strangers.

" 'Sure it could be someone just putting sex fantasies down on paper,' *Penthouse* managing editor Ken Gouldthorpe told me. 'But when you're talking about stuff like this, it's hard to say what's more incredible—fact or fantasy.'

"Either way, nearly all the writers seemed to have learned the *Penthouse* style: innocent descriptions of innocent encounters that result in once-in-a-lifetime sexual experiences. The fantasies always sound blissful and guilt-free, no matter how bizarre.

"As to the bizarre, monopede fetishes and masturbation techniques seem to be fading after strong runs, and word has it that female flashers may soon be the rage. Males may write even those letters, however. At least 80 percent of the correspondence comes from men; nearly everyone, though, tends to sign names and then simply ask that they be withheld. Gouldthorpe even thinks the letters may be 'therapeutic': 'People find out the private habits they consider quirks are really quite commonplace.'

"Are there any quirks 'Forum' deems unacceptable? Gouldthorpe smiles and nods. 'We try to stay away from incest.' "

Let's make a laugh

Daytime television's age-old preoccupation with soap operas and game shows may be in for a change. At the initiative of Sue Cameron, a onetime *Hollywood Reporter* columnist who recently joined ABC's daytime programming team, the network is exploring the possibility of a daily situation comedy show. Sybil Adelman, whose credits include scripts for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Maude, Fay* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show,* has been recruited to write a pilot based loosely upon comedienne Joan Rivers' book *Having a Baby Can Be a Scream.* The show would deal with the misadventures of a young, intelligent woman who has opted to become a housewife rather than pursue a career. The safe story line is no coincidence: "We wanted a character our audience could identify with," says Adelman. "They realize, even if most people don't, that running a household is akin to keeping order in a madhouse. The comic possibilities are limitless."

If the show passes muster with the network brass, its debut can be expected in mid-1976.

Waste not, want not

A Washington State University animal scientist has discovered a cattle feed that is more nutritious than good alfalfa hay. The feed need not be produced on valuable farmland. Unlike grain, it can't be consumed by humans and therefore doesn't represent food that would otherwise be on our tables. Its use would solve monumental environmental problems and there is no danger that it will ever run out.

Why then can't Dr. Rodney Kromann obtain a grant to investigate his discovery? The reason is that the "miracle feed" he describes is human sewage and even Kromann acknowledges that "no one likes the idea of biting into a shit-fed steak." He maintains, though, that cows would willingly eat the waste after it was dried and sterilized, and that humans could not tell the difference in resulting cuts of beef.

"Man has created open systems for disposing of his excrement, garbage and all by-products, thereby creating pollution. These products are not 'waste' but contain vital nutrients for animal and plant life," Kromann maintains. In a little-noticed scientific paper that appeared in *Nutrition Reports International,* Kromann chemically analyzed two types of human sewage and compared them to alfalfa hay, a widely used cattle feed. His analysis showed that the sewage provides more ash, nitrogen, ether extract, cellulose, crude fiber and gross energy than the alfalfa.

The scientist believes that waste is left unused only because people have exiled it from the ecosystem on aesthetic grounds. He claims that a city of 30,000 persons could maintain 1,000 head of cattle merely on its own wastes.

Slicker than you think

Amid much fanfare, the General Electric Company recently announced that by crossbreeding four strains of pseudomonias bacteria, its scientists were nearly ready with a bug that could eat up oceanic oil spills. The company said the bacteria could be freeze-dried onto straw and scattered over the spills; the bacteria absorbs the oil and is then itself devoured by marine life. At first the Federal Energy Agency seemed enthralled. They

Oil spills: the dissolution

announced that the mighty microbes could be the Mr. Clean of the future.

But they may have spoken too soon. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is in charge of oil clean-up techniques, thinks the bugs are a hoax. "We did some work at the University of Texas on several strains of bacteria to degrade oil, including pseudomonias," says EPA spokesman Kirk Jacobsen. "Bacteria is just too slow a process. On the ocean, where you usually think of oil spills, there's not a chance it will work."

Perth sends you its Best for the Holidays

The Dewar Highlander

Mind & Body

Stiff conversation

So you think a couple of drinks at a cocktail party will loosen things up and make conversation free and easy? Well, we've got bad news. Along with its other corrosive effects, alcohol virtually obliterates intelligent conversation, according to three University of California psychiatrists.

The researchers put 18 young couples in a room, gave each person two very stiff drinks and then taped the ensuing babble. An analysis of the transcript showed that the drinkers paid little attention to what anyone else said. Instead, they tended to interrupt and soliloquize. When they did respond to someone else's remarks, more often than not the retort was unrelated to what they had just heard. The researchers later gave the same group two placebo drinks and the conversations were uniformly more interactive, unselfish and lucid.

Crude yes, unhealthy no

Dire warnings notwithstanding, knuckle-cracking won't make your hands bony or gnarled, and it won't turn your joints arthritic. In fact, the gaucherie may even be a form of preventive medicine.

In what must be the only authoritative study on the subject, a UCLA orthopedist recently X-rayed the hands of 28 lifelong knuckle-poppers in a Los Angeles nursing home. Only one of them, it turned out, had arthritic joints. In contrast, the control group of 12 non-knuckle-cracking older women turned up five who had stiff and painful joints.

The findings, published with a light touch in the respected *Journal of Western Medicine,* led the doctor to conclude: "The chief morbid consequence of knuckle-cracking would appear to be its annoying effect on the observer."

Doctors: the cost of living

Even though doctors already make more than any professionals—an average of nearly $60,000 a year for full-time practitioners—they're apparently not satisfied. The Labor Department reports that doctor fees are increasing faster than the cost of living.

During September, the latest month for which statistics are available, MDs hiked their fees 1.1 percent; the consumer price index went up only 0.5 percent. Over the 12-month period ending in September, doctor fees zoomed 11 percent, outpacing the cost of living increase by 30 percent.

The American Medical Association defends the fee inflation on the grounds that doctors have to pay a lot more these days for malpractice insurance. In fact, the premium hikes are hitting only surgical specialists really hard; for other doctors, malpractice coverage generally is still available for less than $750 a year.

Post Scripts

Story of the Hurricane (*NT:* Nov. 14, 1975)

For a singer who became famous by writing songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are 'A Changin'," this latest release marks a return to old territory. Bob Dylan's 11-verse, 12-minute "Story of the Hurricane" is expected to become a rallying point in the high-powered campaign to free Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, described in *New Times* last month. Carter is the former boxer who has spent nine years in prison for murders he apparently did not commit.

JILL KREMENTZ

Dylan: singing Carter's song

Dylan asked Columbia to release the song as a single well in advance of his new album, scheduled to come out some time next year. Columbia resisted, Dylan prevailed and the release was then held up because Dylan had confused some facts in the case. A few lines were potentially libelous, and Dylan had to rewrite them. Now the song is out and selling extremely well. "It helps politically," says George Lois, who has helped mount the campaign to free Carter. "Not too many people outside of New York and New Jersey know about Carter, and this is a way of publicizing it." The song itself is a powerful protest; a key stanza follows:

All of Rubin's cards were marked in advance
The trial was a fixed circus—he never had a chance
The judge made Rubin's witnesses drunkards from the slums
To the white folks who watched he was a revolutionary bum
And to the black folks he was just a crazy nigger
No one doubted that he pulled the trigger
And though they could not produce the gun
The D.A. said he was the one
Who did the deed and the all white jury agreed

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD EGIELSKI

"Bellavia" is a "beautiful way" to hear Chuck Mangione.

"Bellavia" means "beautiful way."
"Mangione" means great music on A&M Records and Tapes.

SP 4557

COLLAGE BY RICHARD SANTINO

Unbeknownst to American farmers, U.S. grain inspectors have been short-weighting and misgrading American grain for years. For buyers, the trick now is to separate the wheat from the shaft.

By Stephen Diamond with Stephen Armbruster

AGAINST THE AMERICAN GRAIN

The Hooker

Pumping hard to push her load to payoff point, the big tug *Dolly K* is winding her twin Cummins 8000s up to high-whine rpms. Eight huge barges head the snakelike parade; pushed by the tugboat, each of these barges carries approximately 1,200 tons of No. 2 hard red winter wheat, enough grain to keep any self-respecting McDonald's addict in burger buns for the next thousand years.

A mild fog hangs over the Mississippi tonight, a cool, murky vapor tinged with a touch of evil. The skipper settles in to navigate the final stretch between Baton Rouge and the riverbank town of Destrehan, some 18 miles above New Orleans. At Destrehan, the megabushels of grain will be sucked up into a huge elevator complex owned by one of the grain trade giants. There, the grain will be inspected, dissected, weighed out and resurrected before export. It will not be the same when it leaves.

At well past 3:00 in the morning, the skipper presents his bills of lading to the foreman on duty at the grain elevators: 320,000 bushels of No. 2 Iowa-grown wheat, ultimate destination, Cairo, Egypt.

The foreman signs the skipper's papers and extracts a sample of the wheat as it is drawn out of the barges and up through a long vacuum tunnel. The grain travels on a three-and-a-half-foot-wide conveyor belt up into the mammoth cement-encased grain elevators. There is something biblical in the scene, perhaps a reminiscence of the Pharaoh's storage silos in the time of Joseph's prophecies. A normal, predawn experience down at the nether end of the Mississippi River, but inside the grain elevators all is not quite kosher.

The 320,000 bushels of No. 2 hard red wheat are officially weighed in as 280,000: A rewritten bill of lading complements the newly entered figure. Of the eight men on duty, three key people are in on the game: the foreman of the elevator company, the company's weighing inspector and the man from the "private" inspection agency. Night is the traditional time of crime, and on the wharves at the end of the Mississippi things are no different. Moreover, the federal grain inspectors are badly understaffed. They spot check 2 percent of the time at best. And tonight they are not around. The grain elevator company is now 40,000 bushels richer, a value conservatively estimated at $120,000. Of this, maybe 10 percent, or $12,000, will be paid to the boys in "bonus" payments or overtime.

A week later, the 280,000 bushels will have been blended into a lesser grade, made into No. 3 or 4 by legally adding organic "trash," or "allowable percentages of foreign matter." It then becomes part of a million-bushel shipment headed to Cairo and purchased under the Food For Peace program, Public Law 480. Although certificates claim the wheat to be No. 2 quality, it is closer to No. 4. But who's to complain?

"It's like guys who deal grass," a long-haired, overalled longshoreman told us. "They buy a pound of good Colombian, mix it with two pounds of shit weed, and somehow they come out at the other end with three pounds of dynamite Colombo! If that ain't enough, they short you a couple of ounces for their trouble. The grain companies ain't no different, except they're dealing in millions of pounds and billions of dollars."

COLLAGE BY RICHARD SANTINO

The Sting

Like most major scandals, the current grain trade commotion centered at the crescent-shaped Port of New Orleans began with the small stuff: nickel-and-dime thievery and the rumor that a ship captain had bribed an inspector to pass a vessel that was unclean.

In the 18 months since the New Orleans investigation was initiated by the U.S. attorney's office here, the scandal has mushroomed into a widespread indictment of the American grain trade, our national system of inspection of grain and even the Department of Agriculture itself.

The dimensions of the scandal are difficult to assess at this point. Fifty-seven individuals and four corporations have been indicted, of which 43 persons and two companies have either been convicted or copped pleas on charges ranging from misgrading grain, short-weighting loads bound for foreign ports, bribery and extortion, income tax evasion and even conspiracy to commit large-scale thefts by corporations of their own customers. As the Watergate "burglary" proved to be a mere preamble, so the grain scandal centered in New Orleans is but the tip of an iceberg: As a result of a combined investigation by the U.S. attorney's office, the FBI, IRS and USDA's Office of Investigation, two senatorial subcommittees have met to discuss the problem, and "emergency legislation" is pending.

Last month, the Bunge Corporation, one of the Big Six grain trade giants, pleaded nolo contendere to two counts of systematically looting grain from its own customers over a 12-year period. The rumored estimate of the amount of theft is said to be in the neighborhood of $5 million, though it could easily be much higher.

But it is not the amount of outright theft, bribery and corruption that is of utmost significance in the grain game: The Port of New Orleans scandal has brought to light a thoroughly unmanageable grain inspection system—a mixed marriage of private and federal—through which the Big Six conglomerates have been allowed to run rampant for more than a decade. These six multinationals control 90 percent of American grain exports, approximately $11 billion worth of annual sales. Their corporate power overshadows the private agencies that are supposed to regulate the grain traffic, and they overshadow the USDA as well. When the results are finally in, it may turn out to be the biggest financial debacle of the century.

As much as this nation apparently depends on the Arabs for oil, that much and more so does the world look here for its food supply. The United States has earned the somewhat dubious nickname "The Saudi Arabia of Wheat."

More grain passes through the Port of New Orleans than any port in the world. This area exports one-third of all feedgrain (wheat, soybean, oats, corn, barley, etc.) leaving this country, over a billion bushels annually.

Blessed with an abundance of good cropland, the American farmer can produce far more grain than we could possibly use for domestic consumption. The exportable surplus becomes a "powerful weapon in the political toolkit," as Secretary of Agriculture Butz has termed it. But more important, grain is a major factor in balancing the American trade deficit: In fiscal 1974 the grain export trade amounted to some $12.5 billion out of $22 billion in overall agricultural exports.

The farmer feels personally accused. The grain was perfect when it left the farm

The American farmer has been urged by his government to plant every available acre; he has been "educated" by its agent, the Department of Agriculture, to use the most scienterrific methods, chemical fertilizers, high-yield seed, powerful bug killer, and he has come to rely on some very expensive harvesting machinery. He gambles against the weather, insect plague, early frost and other acts of God. This year he and the others of his fraternal order have succeeded in growing a record crop.

But once out of his hands, the harvest falls into the realm of speculators, processors, merchants, carriers and inspectors. And many months later, the farmer will read in his airmail copy of the *Des Moines Register* that grain buyers in Mexico, Germany, Israel, Spain and even Russia are complaining of receiving a product inferior to that for which they'd agreed to pay. The complaints escalate, ranging from excessive moisture to misgrading of grains and large-scale repetitive short-weighting of the ordered load. The farmer feels personally accused. The grain was perfect when it left the farm. Not only is he being ripped off by the grain companies when he sells the product, he's also being bad-rapped by the foreign customer.

"We heard a rumor back in early 1973 that an inspector had taken a bribe from a company to pass a ship that wasn't clean," recounted Assistant U.S. Attorney Neil Heusel, a former FBI agent. "We checked it out and quickly saw that it was not an isolated incident." Shortly thereafter, the U.S. attorney's office joined forces with the FBI in the New Orleans area and the USDA's Office of Investigation. This last agency, whose task it is to examine departmental complaints and irregularities, had been dragging its feet, to say the least, until the appointment in 1973 of Harlan L. Ryan as chief of the USDA's Grain Inspection field office.

Called a "witch-hunter and a troublemaker" by some, Ryan, 47, carried a reputation from Des Moines and Chicago of effective and persistent reform. Soft-spoken but obviously tough-minded, he grew up on a soybean farm in Iowa and saw his father gypped at the local grain elevators when they would bring in the crop at the end of the season. Now, 35 years later, he is shaking up the waterfront at the Port of New Orleans:

"Frequently I have to go out at all hours of the night, maybe to back up one of our fellows. They have tremendous pressure put on them by the elevator superintendents." (Ryan uses the soft understatement employed by many government people who'd like to tell you more only their lips are sealed for obvious reasons.) "I saw things going on when I first came down here which I knew weren't right." Ryan's efforts initially resulted in the impaneling of a federal grand jury in August 1974, and indictments soon followed.

Among the first to be charged were 20 "private" grain inspectors. It was their responsibility to maintain uniform standards in the grading process. The price the foreign customer will pay is determined most often at this point. Both the "private" and USDA inspectors use a system of classification codified by the U.S. Grain Standards Act of 1916, amended in 1968.

But built-in conflicts of interest make it well-nigh impossible to trust the private inspector's impartiality. The men and the companies they work for, so-called boards of trade, must be licensed by the USDA, but their cash livelihoods depend on the grain companies they are supposed to regulate. The "private" inspection agencies are paid for each shipment they certify before loading, yet the

Stephen Diamond last reported for NEW TIMES *on nuclear power nemesis Sam Lovejoy. Stephen Armbruster is a free lance living in New Orleans.*

sheer volume of the loading operation defies a careful grading. One export elevator can load a ship in excess of 100,000 bushels per hour. It would be hard to make a careful survey in any event. But why should they try? It is obviously in the better interests of both parties to rush the inspection process.

"It's still going on," Harlan Ryan says solemnly. "They're just doing it more in the dark, underground."

The private inspectors are also in charge of certifying ships as being clean enough to take on foodstuff. Cargo holds can contain petroleum residues from previous hauls, excessive moisture, rats, weevils or even odors that can ruin grain. A shipper stands to lose between $3,000 and $20,000 a day in demurrage charges if its cleanliness certificate is withheld. A $2,500 "gift" to an inspector comes out cheaper any way you slice it.

At the loading platform, grain companies often use secret conveyor belts that draw from pools of "trash," bypassing federal inspectors along the way.

But the federal inspection agents, Ryan's men, are empowered to answer only specific appeals cases and to make periodic spot checks of their private counterparts. These have proven to be a very feeble deterrent. The private inspection agencies handle well over 90 percent of the bulk grain loadings with a labor force that outnumbers the federal inspectors by more than a hundred to one.

"It's far from over," the assistant U.S. attorney explains. "This investigation will go on for at least another year. We'll be looking into each of the grain elevator companies in this area." But New Orleans is only one port, and "problems" have already surfaced at others around the country—the incidents here are only symptomatic of the larger disease rampant in the American grain trade.

Bitter Grapes

"Your attitude . . . to me, typifies the attitude of the Department of Agriculture to this whole subject of grain inspection: delay and inaction."

—Chairman Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, to Undersecretary of Agriculture J. Phil Campbell, on opening day of Senate subcommittee hearings, 6/19/75

The Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Agricultural Policy opened its doors for business on June 19, just as the stench from New Orleans was making its way upriver. On paper, Humphrey's subcommittee, which included senators from such agribusiness states as Kansas, South Dakota, Iowa and Florida, had convened with the express purpose of looking into "Grain Inspection Irregularities and Problems and to Provide Emergency Authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to Restore Confidence in the U.S. Grain Inspection System." But the man to whom this "emergency authority" would have been delegated, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, was out of the country on a speaking tour of Venezuela and Brazil.

Right off the bat, Humphrey brought up the issue of the "Browning Report." Written in January of 1969, this document covered the visit of a "situation team" led by James Browning, a USDA official, to the United Kingdom and other countries of Western Europe. The visit was initiated by complaints received from European grain buyers in preceding years. Browning was overwhelmed by the scope and consistency of complaints:

> Mr. Schmittman of Denka, Dusseldorf, said he had spent 15 years in feed processing and year after year the quality of corn from the U.S. has been declining. Mold has been increasing, broken corn and foreign material has been increasing; moisture that was formerly 10% is now 15%, some corn with 15.5% moisture had a sour and stuffy smell and had to be discharged. . . .

In addition, Browning found that the Europeans were incensed over our penny-ante system of fines for faulty inspection:

> One of the astonishing statements made [in Italy] was that in increasing fines for mishandling or misgrading grain from $1000 to $5000 under the new act [1968] we did not go far enough, that it should have been $100,000 because they felt the shipper stands to make $50,000 or so. They felt the fine was not large enough to be a deterrent to stop either the shipper or the inspector from bribery.

After listing the complaints from the U.K., Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Belgium, Browning himself concludes in a somewhat shaken manner:

> The Grain Division [USDA] should make doubly sure that there is no bribery of inspectors or falsification of certificates or misgradings of grain or improper sampling. . . . After listening to complaints for 3 weeks and seeing the look on people's faces and in their eyes when they accused the inspection system of being subject to bribery, I cannot stress too strongly. . . .

That report was issued more than six years ago, and the foreign complaint department had certainly not slowed in the time since then. In May of this year, prior to the New Orleans indictments, a Spanish grain company, Kelsa S.A., complained that ships arriving from the ports of Philadelphia and New Orleans were often missing as much as 3 percent of the ordered loads.

Undersecretary J. Phil Campbell, Butz' stand-in at the hearings, claimed that neither he nor any of the top USDA officials had ever heard of the Browning Report until it was brought out in the *Des Moines Register* and the *New York Times*. Campbell insisted that the Browning Report was not an "official" document of the USDA and never had been.

But the senators had other questions for the USDA officials on the carpet: How was it that in the eight years between 1966 and 1974 the number of active agents in the USDA's Grain

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Inspection Division had been reduced from 300 to 220 men, while in the same time period the volume of exports-to-be-inspected had doubled? Was the USDA tying its own hands behind its back?

And what of the Griffin incident? In 1971 a USDA Grain Division man named W.W. Griffin stationed in the New Orleans field office reported the discovery of phony grain gradings and other irregularities. He filed a series of reports to his immediate supervisors, only to be rebuffed. When he presented the matter to the USDA's Office of Investigation, Griffin was told not to bother his superiors with trivialities. At the Senate hearings, the USDA officials could not answer on the topic of the Griffin case: Two weeks later they submitted a brief listing the facts but were still unable to identify the superior who'd clamped down on Griffin's complaints.

At another point in the hearings, Francis Riley, a 44-year-old chicken farmer from Boaz, Ala., and chairman of the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, told the senators about the time he tried to buy corn from Cargill Corporation, the biggest of the Big Six traders:

"It was shipped to me as No. 2 corn, of which I'd ordered 25,000 bushels, but it included 11.8 percent of broken and foreign materials, trash, and was 4.7 percent oats. I have the grade with me. Purchased as No. 2 and shipped to me as No. 5.

"But you simply cannot blend and feed No. 5 corn to poultry and get results. It will not work. The blending practices as practiced by the grain companies today are outright criminal and should be treated as such. A hen cannot eat enough of a low-test weight or light-weight corn to maintain a body and lay. It just doesn't work that way.

"If I sound like it is bitter grapes, it really is, because there is not a grain company in the country today that I will trust any further. Although I have been in business with them and tried to work for them for 25 years and have come to the conclusion that there is not a one of them that can be trusted."

Robert Johnson, a former New Orleans USDA Grain Division inspector, told the senators of threats on his life after he'd forced the Bayside Grain Elevator in Reserve, La., to unload a shipment that contained high percentages of sour grain:

"Rumors began to circulate that both my kneecaps would be broken, that there was a contract out on my life," the former inspector testified. Since quitting the USDA, Johnson has changed his name and address, carries a gun and generally keeps a low profile. His case was complicated (or strengthened) by the fact that he'd admitted to taking a bribe several years earlier. Placed on a probation of sorts, he apparently absolved himself by becoming a tough inspector:

"In spite of what he'd done in the past, he was a good inspector. I don't know if he turned over a new leaf or what," says Harlan Ryan of his former agent. "Johnson did a good job and he became very much disliked on the riverfront. The inspection agencies would call me up as soon as he'd been there and complain. It was that way all along, but they could never prove him wrong. As far as the threat itself, I'd say it was real enough, but none of our other men has been threatened like that."

Johnson's testimony before the senators highlighted the strain placed on USDA field office personnel at the lower

A shipper stands to lose as much as $20,000 a day if his cleanliness certificate is withheld. A $2,500 "gift" to an inspector is cheaper any way you slice it

levels. They worked under limited circumstances, attempting to police the numerous private inspectors, inspection agencies and grain elevators, while at the higher echelons USDA officials maintained a policy of no see, no hear, no speak.

The matter of Butz' absence during the early weeks of the Senate subcommittee hearings would warrant no special notice but for two coincidences: (1) The week before Sec. Butz left for Brazil, Jorge Born, president of Bunge & Born, Lda., of Buenos Aires, had been released from nine months' captivity by Montonero revolutionary forces. The firm had paid a reported $60 million—the highest ransom ever for a kidnapping—and Mrs. Peron's government was enraged that so much money had fallen to their enemies. As a result of the uproar, the entire directorate of Bunge & Born temporarily transferred their operations to the firm's Rio de Janeiro offices in Brazil. They were all in Rio at the same

time. (2) Less than a month after Butz' return from South America, the Bunge Corp. (USA) and 13 of its employees were indicted with conspiracy to defraud their own customers, the first (with more to follow) of the grain giants to be so indicted. We called Butz' office and asked whether he'd met with any of the Bunge executives in Brazil and whether they might have discussed the growing grain troubles up north.

"Well, Dr. Butz may have chatted with them in the cocktail line after his speech at the American Chamber of Commerce down there, but he certainly did not discuss the forthcoming indictments," a spokesman said.

20th-Century Pirates

". . . the American farmer has never produced a higher quality grain, and yet foreign buyers have increasing complaints about the deteriorating quality of our grain on delivery.

Obviously something is happening to the grain along the way. I suspect three or four things are occurring.

1. Our inspection system is faulty and corrupt.

2. Our grading standards are inadequate.

3. Our grain handling methods need revision, and

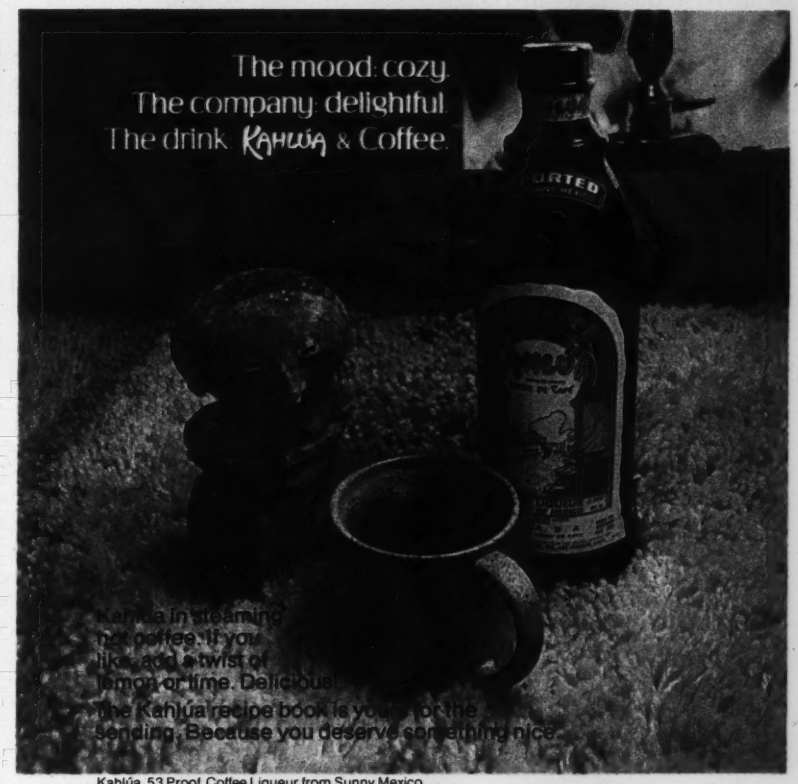
4. Six major grain trading companies so monopolize the grain trade and all its aspects that effective regulations can be thwarted by their size and political influence."

—Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa), at Senate subcommittee hearings

The Grain Trade, aka the Big Six, is the multinational conglomerates that control 90 percent of the $12.5 billion in exports from this country to the rest of the world.

Their names are Cargill, Continental, Bunge, Louis Dreyfus & Cie., Cook and ADM (Archer-Daniels-Midland). The first four are privately owned and thus do not have to file with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission. Cargill and Continental dealt 50 percent of that $11 billion, Bunge took 20 percent and the other 30 percent was split among the last three.

But what "multinational" really means is that these conglomerates can not be policed by any one individual nation. Their billion-dollar holdings, subsidiaries and vertically integrated offsprings are too far-flung across too many international borders to ever be held in check.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*Cargill**

At the top is Cargill, a firm that for the past century has quietly become one of the nation's largest corporations, probably the largest privately held corporation in the U.S.

Cargill's sales are in the billions, 3 billion in 1972. . . . *Fortune*'s listing of the largest 500 industrial corporations in the US. shows only 26 with bigger sales than Cargill's. Ranking well below Cargill's sales . . . are Bethlehem Steel, Kraftco, Lockheed, Tenneco, Greyhound, General Foods and Dow Chemical.

Cargill's reign in grain is mainly in conveying. Cargill is a handler and trader, storing grain and seed-oil in a massive complex of elevators at more than sixty locations. Cargill's total storage capacity of 180 million bushels is almost 2.5 times as great as the total storage capacity of ADM, a grain trade rival.

Cargill loads grain from its elevators onto its own barges, trucks, railroad cars and ships, using mechanical grain handling aids developed by its own researchers. The company maintains plants and offices at more than 250 North American locations . . .

The Big Six are pirates in the oldest tradition: The flag they fly is the Jolly Roger, the black flag of no nation, and their inner dictum is *secrecy über alles.* For years these 20th-century pirates have gotten away with unchecked highway robbery; government personnel readily admit that the Big Six not only have farmers and consumers over a barrel, they've got the whole planet over that barrel.

*Continental**

Business is good—a conservative estimate puts Continental's sales at $2.5 billion. Continental is large and diversifying, moving from the shadows of the grain trade world into consumer products. . . .

[Michel Fribourg] controls the company in a bizarre manner for this age of corporate managers. He owns more than 90% of Continental's stock, *Business Week* says, and "separating his personal holdings from those of Continental Grain is difficult and probably academic."

His personal holdings are extensive:

There are at least 100 companies under the Fribourg umbrella and new ventures in many new markets are being added regularly. American housewives buy Fribourg's Oroweat bread, his Polo Food frozen dinners, and his Hilbun chickens which are fattened on his Wayne feed. Pets eat Ful-O-Pep animal food. Industrial plants and private homes are located on Fribourg's vast real estate holdings in such places as France, Morocco, Switzerland, Staten Island and Long Island. Some 50,000 head of cattle graze on Fribourg's Argentine estancias, covering 250,000 acres, and his Argentine supermarkets are supplied by Agricom, his food distributorship.

"Look," a USDA Grain Division man told us, "grain has got to keep moving. These companies are the only ones with the power and efficiency to handle the volume of traffic." The USDA official lights a cigarette, and the drab metallic furnishings of his office seem to mirror his personal helplessness: "The grain trade controls the barges, railway vehicles, ocean-going tankers and, of course, they've got the capital all locked up. If the department, or even the U.S. Congress were to come down on the grain trade, hell, the whole economy would go down the drain in a flash."

*Bunge Corporation**

Bunge Corp., with U.S. headquarters in New York, is one of the most privately privately-held grain trade corporations. It is by one account the third largest in the world, second only to Cargill and Continental. But Bunge has kept the cloak of secrecy more tightly drawn around its operations than the others have.

Bunge is the U.S. arm of Bunge & Born, Lda., a vast, little known Buenos Aires-based conglomerate that controls 20% of the world's grain shipments, according to *Business Week.*

Bunge's storage capacity is around 100 million bushels. The corp. maintains offices and agents in 80 foreign countries; has 22 river, five interior rail, and four port terminals and 100 country (inland) elevators in the U.S. It operates 105 barges with total tonnage of 93,380 gross tons, and controls 75,000 railway cars. . . .

The Big Six keep in constant touch with their subsidiaries and other worldwide trade connections through the

*The Agribusiness Accountability Project, a Washington-based nonpartisan public interest group, has done several excellent in-depth studies of which *The Great Grain Robbery & Other Stories* by Martha M. Hamilton and others is the best. The book spells out grain trade corruption focusing on the Russian wheat deal of 1972, and not coincidentally serves as an indictment against the USDA and its pro-Big Six policies. All *quotes are from the same book. Agribusiness Accountability Project, c. 1972, 1000 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK DIAMOND

Grain elevators: America's exportable surplus has become, according to Earl Butz, a "powerful weapon in the political toolkit."

most sophisticated communications networks—their financial "espionage" units would make the Shah of Iran envious. It is not uncommon for CIA personnel to court their private enterprise counterparts in an effort to pick at each other's data.

The grain trade can, and most certainly does, manipulate the futures and commodities markets world over. First, and most obvious, they are buying and selling in volume with a capital *V*; second, their mega-computer brains keep a precision watch on the variables of planetary weather conditions, climate reorganization, employing all available data and feeding it through their hardware in order to predict the rise and fall of world agriculture; and third, as far as U.S. exports are concerned, the Big Six have a particular magnetic sway over the directorate of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Revolving Doors

"Butz said the investigators have no evidence at this point that any Agriculture Department employees or grain company officials were involved in unlawful conduct.

" 'That's not saying they weren't,' he added. 'Every man has his price.' "

—reported by James Risser in the *Des Moines Register*, 5/30/75

They call it the Revolving Door Policy because the man comes in from the "private sector," spins around a bit in government service, then goes out right back where he began.

The most obvious case, and probably the one responsible for the moniker, was the appointment of Dr. Earl Butz by President Nixon in 1971. Butz had been serving on the board of directors of Ralston Purina, a major domestic grain company. The man Butz replaced as secretary of agriculture, Clifford Hardin, returned to private life and joined Butz' alma mater, Ralston.

The current director of the USDA's Export Marketing Service (EMS) is George Shanklin, who for the seven years previous to his appointment had been in charge of Bunge Corp.'s Washington office. Lucky Shanklin didn't even have to "relocate." In July, during the first big wave of New Orleans grain indictments, Shanklin was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* as saying: "Whatever it is [in New Orleans], I'm sure it's not this inspector thing."

There are many others who have gone through the revolving door process, and though it's a cute concept, the repercussions on the American farmer and consumer are deadly serious.

A glimpse at just one aspect of the disastrous Russian grain deal of '72 can give us sufficient view of the arrogant attitudes held by the Earl of Agriculture and his sheriffs:

At the outset of the deal, there was the suggestion that the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. make their deal on a one-to-one basis, government-to-government. The bulk of the grain purchased would come from official USDA warehouses, government-owned surpluses; unfortunately, it didn't go down that way.

The first American negotiating team dispatched to Moscow was headed by Butz himself, but it was Assistant Secretary Clarence D. Palmby who was pulling the toggle switches. Several weeks prior to leaving for the U.S.S.R., Palmby had been offered (and was seriously considering) a high post with Continental Grain. Needless to say, this high-level public servant did not discuss the conflict-of-interest job offer with anyone in the USDA before or during the negotiations with the Russians.

William Robbins, the *New York Times* man whose reports have added fuel to the New Orleans grain caldron, captures the spirit of the Palmby *affaire* in his excellent work *The American Food Scandal* (1974):

> A government-to-government deal would have had advantages. It would have given responsible officials a precise knowledge of what the Russians were receiving from U.S. stores; it would have had a restraining influence on the price spiral that accompanied heavy buying from private stocks.
>
> Palmby flatly turned down the direct purchase proposal. Whatever deal should be made, he said, would have to be channeled through the private grain companies. In less than a

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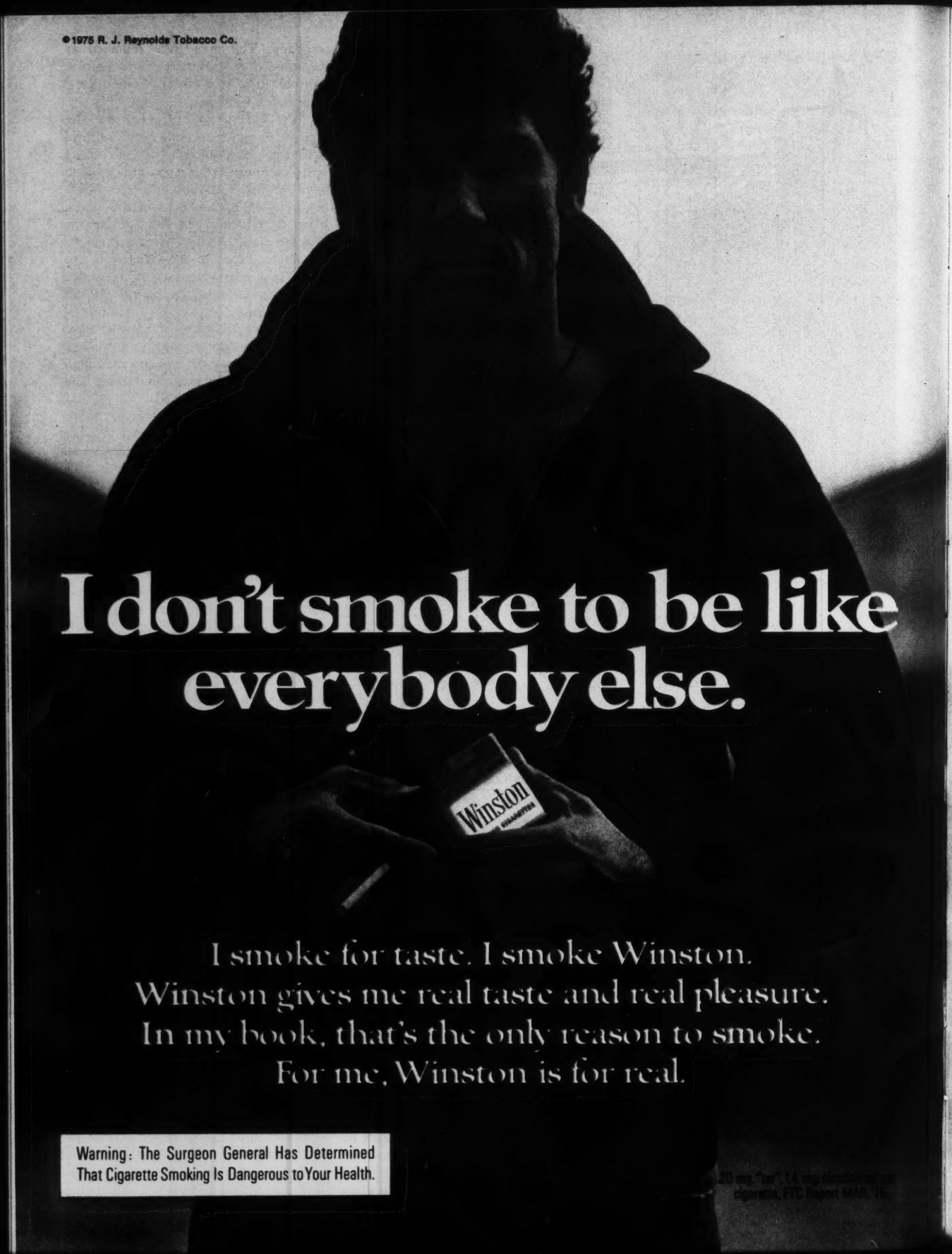

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month, he was to join the company that made nearly half of the 1972 wheat sales to the Soviet Union and that gained proportionate shares of the subsidies and profits involved.

One of the more quixotic twists of the grain game is that the USDA subsidizes these multinational, multibillion-dollar dealers. The price of American-grown grain is always substantially higher per bushel than the world market price. In order for the grain merchant to "compete" on the world market, someone has to make up the differentials—the taxpayer, through USDA subsidies, has the pleasure of providing the grain pirates with built-in, guaranteed profits. In fiscal 1974 the USDA paid approximately $350 million in subsidies to the Big Six and others.

In point of fact, the Russian wheat burn of '72 hinged on assurances by the USDA to Cargill and Continental that the subsidies would be continued in full through the term of the deal. Before the final "bargain" was struck (at an estimated cost to the American consumer of $3 billion a year in higher food prices), Continental's executives had the assurance from Carroll Brunthaver, Palmby's replacement, that the USDA subsidies would be there. Brunthaver, by the way, came to USDA from Cook, another one of the Big Six.

The system is not one of outright bribe between the grain trade and the USDA, it's more like an indirect form of payola—"deferred rewards," as the Agribusiness Accountability Project has termed it. The Palmby episode is a perfect example.

The Well-Greased Grapevine

"Right now they're using floating rigs, and we have the suspicion that the quality of grain going on board from the floating rigs isn't necessarily that which it has been represented to be on the certificates . . . in some cases . . . ." Inspector Ryan adds the last words as an afterthought. He shows us a professional photographer's color portrait of the "floating rig," a recent innovation in the grain game. It consists of a huge crane operation and platform seated on an anchored vessel out in the Mississippi. The floating rigs act as intermediate elevators, receiving the grain from inland barges and loading it directly onto the ocean-going freighters. The grain never touches land, thus bypassing the grain elevators and making the federal grain inspector's life even more difficult.

"We have no way of getting onto the floating rigs without everyone on the waterfront knowing about it," Ryan says ruefully. The fifth floor window of Ryan's office in the Federal Building on Loyola Avenue looks out at the construction skeleton of a 25-story hotel, and next to it, the ominous oval of the Louisiana Superdome.

"When we go out to inspect the floating rigs, we go on the public launch. Word gets passed along the way. Before you even get there everyone knows you're coming. And then when you're out there, the launch comes back and calls last trip until 7:00 in the morning. Either you stay there till 7:00 in the morning, or you get off then and there. Most of the big companies are using floating rigs, in addition, of course, to the regular elevators, partly because of this year's record crop. And the floating rigs can move up to 30,000 or 40,000 bushels per hour."

Ryan's task is certainly no bed of roses, and though there has been no outright violence so far, the threat constantly lingers beneath the waterfront surface. Aside from the millions, if not billions, of dollars involved at the Big Six level, there are literally hundreds of jobs at stake, not only in New Orleans but at the other ports around the nation.

"I purchased it as number 2 grain, and it was shipped to me as number 5 . . .11.8 percent of broken and foreign materials, trash, 4.7 percent oats. . ."

Although there are no heroes in this story, Harlan Ryan comes closest to the role. His persistence in bringing much of the New Orleans mess to the surface was instrumental to both the grand jury's revelations and the later inquiries conducted by the senators.

"The rumor came to me that there were two petitions drawn up to have me put out of New Orleans. . . ." Again Inspector Ryan hesitates, not vain but matter-of-fact about his unpopularity. "The petition was initiated by one of the boards of trade down here. I heard of it from a manager who'd been asked to sign one petition but refused. These things get around very fast, the grapevine on the waterfront is well-greased. The petitions were intended for someone in Washington, I don't know who, but they never made it that far."

The Big "Finigle"

"The most glaring deficiency lies in the present grain inspection system. It is barely a system at all, but rather a confused hodge-podge of private, State, and Federal."

—Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa), in *The Congressional Record*, 8/1/75

The Destrehan Board of Trade (DBOT) is housed in a small, one-story building 35 yards from the mammoth Bayside Grain Elevator, which is at least 100 times larger than the trade office. Senator Clark has called them "sweethearts," and it sort of looks that way from the physical layout—the muscle-bound macho grain giant and its pert little mistress, the private, nonprofit inspection agency. In the late afternoon sun, the shifts are changing, wives are driving up to the gate to wait for their men. The cement elevator seems almost like a mighty power plant—and perhaps it is, a food-power plant.

We were not allowed to see the inside workings of these overgrown succubi, with their miles of conveyor belts streaming back and forth with billions of kernels, feeding in and bleeding out 100,000 bushels per hour. The giants shun the public's eye on their facilities as well as on their finances: "Sorry, against regulations," said one grain elevator office. "Definitely not," Continental told us. "We're expanding and the insurance people wouldn't like it." "Not until this inspection mess is over with," came word from the Cook Company's main office. The plant manager at the St. Charles Elevator Company allowed as how he couldn't let us in for a look "without the owner's consent. I work for them and I do what they say." Other efforts only accumulated unreturned phone calls and polite refusals.

"That, indeed, is where they make their profits," says Dan Willis, 38, chief inspector for the Destrehan Board of Trade, and he points out through his office window at the fortresslike grain elevator. "The law sets the percentages for allowable foreign materials, and they'd be foolish to sell anything better than it has to be. When the elevator companies blend it to the limit, they control the quality and also maximize their profits." Willis supervises DBOT's nine inspectors, who rotate between this facility and another similar one at Bunge's elevators down the road. Five of the men have "full" licenses—they're authorized to grade and weigh all types of grains, while the other four are limited to particular

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categories. In the past year, two DBOT inspectors have been indicted on charges of bribery and their licenses subsequently revoked by the USDA.

The DBOT is one of five private inspection agencies operating in New Orleans. Founded in 1961, the agency came to life at the same time as Bunge Corp. rebuilt its elevators after a disastrous fire. DBOT's leader these past 14 years, Bryan J. Lehmann Jr., is a former state representative who did legal work for Bunge before starting his inspection agency. Lehmann told Senator Clark's committee of inquiry that the grain giant had "loaned me $10,000 or $15,000, I don't recall which," when he first got DBOT off the ground. The loan was "advance payment" on subsequent fees for inspection that DBOT would later perform for Bunge. In spite of the apparent conflict of interest right at the outset, the USDA gave Lehmann his license.

"Do the grain elevators ever exceed the legal limits of blending?" we asked Willis.

"No, not to my knowledge," he replied. "It's not really my department. If someone's finigelin' with the scales, it's the elevator people themselves, not us. It's also feasible that someone could get inside the scales and finigle with them, too."

Just such a method had actually been in operation at the Bunge elevators. A secret switch had been installed so that the Bunge superintendent could put the weighing scales on "hold" and then be free to write in any weight he chose. This was one way the elevator built up large pilfered surpluses. An obliging middleman would then "fence" the stolen grain and split the profits with the grain company. Bunge's fence was the Degelos Bros. Grain Company, operating under several names out of New Orleans and keeping its cash in Bahamian bank accounts. They would arrive at the elevators with appropriate barges and boxcars and misleading papers, pick up the load of "skimmings" and sell it on the open market. But the hometown heroes couldn't always cover their tracks and on occasion had to call for help from the New York office. Phony documentation for the movement of the grain was drawn up, and thus it came to be recorded in company history that a certain barge delivered 54,981 bushels of corn on February 15, 1968, when it was in fact hauling aluminum from Paducah, Kentucky.

So far 13 Bunge employees, including two high-level vice-presidents, have been indicted and have pleaded nolo contendere to the charges of stealing from their customers, but there are clear-

ly plenty more thieves on the waterfront yet to be discovered.

Two weeks after the Bunge indictments in July, the grand jury brought similar charges against the neighboring St. Charles Grain Elevator Company, owned by Adnac, a joint venture of ADM and Garnac of Switzerland. Adnac and six of its high-level executives are accused of conspiring to steal grain from June '71 to June '74, causing grain inspectors to falsify certificates and defrauding the government by interfering with the regulatory functions of the USDA. The Adnac indictments also pinpointed instances where large quantities of grain were listed as having been loaded on ships when actually the grain never left the elevator. It further revealed that the elevator employed a secret conveyor belt that would draw pools of "trash" and cheaper grains out to the loading platform, bypassing inspectors and automatic sampling devices along the way. In all,

In fiscal 1974 the USDA paid approximately $350 million in subsidies to the Big Six and others

the company has been charged with nine overt acts in violation of the conspiracy statutes.

In still another case, the Mississippi River Grain Elevator Company (MRGE), of Myrtle Grove, La., has been charged with systematic theft of entire bargeloads of diverted grain. These transactions also involved Degelos Company as the "fence." Evidence documents that at least $817,612 in illegal income accrued to the conspirators. MRGE was in the habit of substituting cheaper stock on orders for soybeans and would reserve top-quality beans for the elevator's owner, Italian magnate Serrafino Ferruzzi. Ferruzzi is one of Europe's largest soybean processors. His purchases from MRGE were listed as low-grade, low-price stock when in fact the stock he was buying was the best. A Ferruzzi employee who worked upriver at the firm's loading terminal in Davenport, Iowa, was asked by Senator Clark if he had been requested to misgrade corn. "I wasn't asked," said John Leese to the senators, "I was told." Leese also suggested that Ferruzzi's inland scales were habitually adjusted to short-weight the farmers.

In late October it was revealed that Ferruzzi actually owned part of the Delta Weighing and Inspection Bureau, which had been licensed to inspect Ferruzzi's traffic. In an unprecedented action, probably a result of the intense media and senatorial heat, the USDA revoked Delta's inspection licenses. Delta is the first of the private inspection agencies to be put out of business, but indications are that there will be others.

On October 8, 1975, a federal judge in New Orleans District Court fined the Bunge Corporation $10,000 on two counts of conspiracy, at Galveston and at New Orleans, for systematic theft over a 12-year period. "A slap on the wrist" is admittedly a hackneyed cliche, but remember, the corporation does more than $2 billion a year in gross sales—the $20,000 fine was probably far less than they paid out in bribes over six months. Echoes of the European complaints to Browning of penny-ante fines come rebounding back as if through a grain tunnel.

In the judgment, the corporation agreed to establish an "affirmative action program" aimed at preventing recurring theft. The U.S. attorney's office offered the self-policing measures as a condition for dropping other parts of the conspiracy charges. The new program also calls for stricter auditing procedures, increased federal inspections and a brand-new battery of automatic scales. The clean-up applies to all five Bunge export terminals, not just the two convicted.

"The other three were voluntary on the company's part," Assistant Attorney Heusel said. "And it's a good decision. It might save investigators in those other places a lot of time." But it is important to remember that these self-improvement measures are—ultimately—voluntary. Like the other grain traders, Bunge's financial records still remain flush to the vest; and the company continues to maintain favor in high places in the event of a really serious crunch.

Back on Capitol Hill, Senator Humphrey's bill to provide emergency authority to Secretary Butz has passed in the Senate but lingers in the House. Behind it, a bill by Senator Clark proposing total federalization of the grain inspection system waits for an audience in the Senate. Yet both pieces of legislation are being held in abeyance pending a GAO report of the whole shooting match, as requested by Senator Humphrey. The GAO study is not due until late February 1976. By then much of this fall's export harvest will have left the country—likely as not, laced with mold, weevils, organic "trash," petroleum residue and rat droppings.●

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Creem, MARCH 1975

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For thousands of its veterans, and the women they came home to, the Vietnam War goes on

THE WAR IN THE BEDROOM

By Corinne Browne

Last summer a friend, an ex-Army medic whose hair turned white in Vietnam and whose body carries shrapnel that drives airport detector devices wild, came to visit me. We drove down to Delaware late at night, got out and walked along Bethany Beach. I was stiff and tired, so I ran up the beach, stopping now and then to wave to him. After a while I turned back, splashed in the calm tide, sniffed the salt air, stripped off my sweater getting ready to swim. I noticed that he was standing a few yards from the high-water mark, dead still. "Want to swim?" I called. He didn't answer. I walked faster, wondering what he was thinking about. The beach, which had felt friendly, suddenly seemed eerie. When I got closer, I saw that his eyes were riveted on a black object in the sand. "What is it?" I stepped forward. He grabbed my arm, pulled me back. His eyes were enormous. I got away from him, lifted the dead horseshoe crab by the tail and swung it in front of him, hoping he would laugh. "Don't you have them in California?" Instead of laughing, he looked at me with anguish, spoke in a whisper, "It looked like a mine."

Two and a half million men came back from the interminable Asian land war that finally ended last spring. They returned with wounds and guilt and expectations and were met with an inadequate GI bill, a disastrous job market and civilians who had long ago become inured to the after-effects of the instant TV war. Thousands of these vets are in hospitals, in prisons, on drugs and on the streets. More than a half million Vietnam vets, or one-fifth of all the returned soldiers, have attempted suicide. More of them have died since coming home than died in Vietnam. According to the Veterans' Administration, one out of five, or 520,000, are having serious and prolonged readjustment problems. So our weaponry has been turned back on us, tearing, as it did over there, through homes and families and loves.

Traditionally, women throw flowers at returning soldiers. This time they are torn between their horror of the war and their loyalty to the men who fought it. This time they are learning that the men who came home to them are neither cowards nor heroes, but only survivors. No matter how liberated she may be, a woman chooses a man, not an ideology; no matter how high her consciousness, she will suffer from his suffering. Avenues of meaningful help for Vietnam veterans have been either blocked or empty, and the same is true for their women. The need for help is spelled out by the statistics: According to a study done by the White House Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, one-third of the Vietnam vets were married before they went to Vietnam, and one-fourth got married soon after their return. Up to one-fifth of these marriages failed within ten months after homecoming.

The statistics don't speak of the girlfriends who left or got left. They don't say what it is like to hear a man scream night after night in his sleep; or how it hurts when a man tries to explain that he can't make love to you because his hands have done things that are too terrible; or

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what it is like to sleep next to a stump. Statistics can't explain the helpless feeling of watching a man rage because he can't get a job with a less-than-honorable service discharge. Or how it feels when he beats you up and then cries his heart out and swears he doesn't know why he did it. The ramifications of Vietnam are so deep and so pervasive that, in order to live with its veterans, women now too must go through the long process of becoming survivors.

Almost 12,000 women are married to totally disabled Viet vets. Another 25,000 are married to paraplegics or quadraplegics. Uncounted thousands live with wounded veterans. Physical wounds never end in physicality.

Denise's ex-husband collected hands in Vietnam. "He cut off a finger and kept it in a bottle or something. He was mad he couldn't bring it home."

Denise is 23, a small woman with long, brown hair and delicate features. Sometimes she used to wake her husband too quickly. "He'd break up and scream and go to hit me," she remembers quietly, a hint of Texas childhood in her accent. "I don't know what he was thinking. I never did find out. . . ." Other times he'd get angry and hit her. "It seems like Vietnam stays with people."

Denise left—went off to California. Through friends she met Michael, who was just out of an Army hospital, missing both legs. She thought he was nice, but "the idea of going to bed with him repulsed me." One morning an old man called Denise and other friends to say he had found Michael outside town. They found him filthy, semi-dehydrated, looking "like death." He had been drinking, taking pills, had driven out into the desert, stumbled off the road and, wanting to kill himself, ended up shooting holes in his prosthesis. Toward dawn he had crawled back to his truck without his artificial legs. He felt like a coward because he had failed to commit suicide. Denise had once tried to kill herself and empathized."When I saw him I was mad, but I wanted to help him somehow. I wanted to talk to him about what he had done."

They talked and got high and she began spending the night. "I thought he was exciting and nice and a gentleman. His legs never bothered me. It doesn't make any difference when you're in bed whether or not people have feet. We used to take a lot of baths together. The stumps smell bad sometimes but they never seemed ugly. It was just part of him."

When Denise got pregnant they decided on an abortion. "Michael's afraid if he had kids they'd think they had a gimp father. When he falls down he gets really mad and yells a lot. He figures it would be the wrong way to raise a child."

Although Denise is an independent woman who goes on trips alone, likes to read and study and walk their dogs, she spends a great deal of time trying to figure out how to react to Michael's moods. His anger comes mainly when he thinks he's failing to live up to what he should be. "When he's mad, whatever I do is wrong. I know he takes it out on me because he loves me. Still, I don't think he's that dependent on me. When I go on a trip he says 'if you come back' not 'when you come back.' "

After moving to Colorado, Michael began studying gunsmithing while Denise went to school. But she remembers other times in California. Like the night of the junior college dance when Michael was drunk, thought a cop was saying things about him under his breath. "Mike went up and said, 'I'm going to kill you.' I got him home, hid his guns. I tried to hide the car keys but he got the truck and went back, threatened to use his crutches on the cop. The cop really did us a favor. He just said he'd take him to jail if there was any trouble. I was holding onto the cop. I had his skin under my fingernails."

2.6 million men returned with wounds and expectations and were met with an inadequate GI bill and a disastrous job market

Denise's suffering may have been less flamboyant than Michael's but it built up in its own way. One New Year's Eve, after continuous fighting, Michael fell down in the mud, threw his crutch. "I didn't pick it up. I just went on home. He had never hit me or threatened me but that night he got home, pushed me down. I ran in the bathroom and locked the door and started playing with the razor. He broke the door down. I guess I just wanted him to know how upset I was."

Colorado has brought bad times, too. Once or twice Michael has pointed a loaded gun at her and at himself. "I can't believe he'd really hurt me but he might hurt himself."

Denise is haunted by the fact that she has considered leaving Michael. "A month ago I was ready to say screw it. I felt no love for him. Before, I always thought I would stay, no matter what. But now I think one more time and I'm gonna walk out. It scares me because if I think that way it really might end. It seems hard letting someone down. And, then, my first marriage failed. What do I do? Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I read. Mostly I think things will get better."

Although Denise is opposed to war and believes the real survivors are those who refused to go, she says she'd tolerate more from a man who has been in combat. "Because I have such ugly notions about war. It dehumanizes people." And, betraying an innocence about her own courage, she says, "I'm sure I would have been chicken."

I told Annie, a 25-year-old Milwaukee woman who has lived with a Viet vet for five years, what Denise had said. She differs. "I would put up with more from a man who hadn't been to war because he would not have been humbled by the experience, by the firepower in the world. War is not a mystery; it's part of the system."

Annie went to prison at 18 on a marijuana charge and, at 21, emerged "hard and blunt and loud." The years in jail made it easy for her to understand John, an ex-Marine, just back from Vietnam, recently divorced. His wounds took the form of psychic numbness, anger turned inward, or, as Annie puts it, "he had a big empty space."

Both veterans of brutal institutions, they moved together toward a left-wing, antiwar ideology, joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War 1971 demonstration in Washington, D.C., where vets returned their medals to their makers. Annie was one of five women among a thousand vets. "Because of having fought and survived in prison, I had a strong understanding of what had happened to them. At Arlington Cemetery all the vets knelt with their fists in the air. I was kneeling between John and a guy whose legs were so full of shrapnel he could hardly get up and down. I wanted to throw my probation papers away with all those medals."

In spite of Annie's understanding and her organizational abilities, Vietnam Veterans Against the War didn't want female members. Even though, as a

A free-lance writer based in Woodstock, N.Y., Corinne Browne is working on a book called Casualty.

young ex-paratrooper said, "We had nothing to come back to but the women," the military was most intent on teaching soldiers to forget the women back home. The drill sergeant snarled, "Better take out your insurance and leave it to your mother 'cause some guy's fucking your girl right now!" WACs were called lesbians or prostitutes. Vietnam gave soldiers whores and the clap, not friends or sweethearts. Sexual equality was okay if it looked like Gloria Steinem, not if it talked like her. VVAW supported the women's movement but drew the line at its own perimeter. Annie put on John's battle jacket, went to meetings, talked about sexism, insisted on the value of vicarious experience. Other women joined her, and after a struggle they were accepted. Annie became a leader in the organization and was chosen as VVAW's representative at the 1973 World Peace Congress in Moscow.

However much she defines herself both as a liberated woman and as a political being, through her association with VVAW, Annie is still a woman who lives with a man who was wounded in Vietnam. Emotional hurts distort bodies. For a long time, instead of being able to cry, John's eyes would simply sting. And, like many vets who became rigidly controlled in order to stay alive and sane, he is often unable to respond to Annie's problems.

"We'd been living together for a couple of years. I had been dealing with John's feelings for a long time, then I got a lot of problems in my own head. I couldn't get it together on the sexual level, couldn't make love. After a couple of weeks John started freaking—finally he asked me what happened. I started to cry, tried to tell him how I was feeling. He just lay there. Didn't say a word. There were no vibes, I couldn't get anything from him. He had no feelings at all about it. I couldn't look at him or hardly talk to him for a week. I had to solve it by myself but I couldn't do it. I felt completely frustrated. I had hit a dead end. What do you do? What kind of decisions can you make when you're by yourself?"

They came close to separating, but in the long run their problems have drawn them closer together.

As for children, she says, "I was pregnant once, had an abortion. Right now John is afraid it would connect us up too much, so we just hold it in the back of our minds."

She wants to go on living with him, believes that the trust they share could never be duplicated. "Interdependence, I would say, keeps me around. We are real helpmates. Partners. And anyway, I'm basically lazy. I couldn't do it all over

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again with someone else. It's still the same old shit, right?"

In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to trace the source of anger and pain in any man-woman relationship. Pat Parker, a teacher in New York City, formed a rap group for women who were involved with vets. She believes that middle-class white women often don't know if their problems stem from everyday male-female conflicts or from their men being vets. "White women are more abstract and guilt-ridden than black or Puerto Rican women, who were often already married when their men went to war. When the vets returned strung out, drinking, bitter, either not wanting or not able to get jobs, many black women walked away from it. Their will to survive is very strong."

But for many women, surviving means keeping a family together. Bernadine lives in the South Bronx, writes "other" on forms that ask her race—she is black, Puerto Rican, Irish and French. Her husband is black. Bernadine, a WAC in the medical corps, was discharged when she became pregnant. John was drafted after the baby was born. She waited for him to come back from Vietnam, not afraid he would die but very afraid he would change.

In some ways he had. Two weeks after his return there was trouble on the street. "John ran out and tried to stop it. The cop put his hands on him, had his gun out, pushed him against the fence. I was watching. Scared. John pushed the gun down, said, 'If you're gonna pull it out you better use it. I just came home from Vietnam.' The cop quit."

He had insomnia. He had got used to not sleeping in Vietnam. When he did go to sleep he had nightmares. "When it first happened he was shaking so hard I thought he was having an epileptic fit."

Although John had served well in Vietnam, he couldn't adjust to life at Fort Dix and went AWOL with regularity. Consequently he got a Bad Conduct Discharge and became one of the 450,000 men with other-than-honorable discharges which often make them ineligible for VA benefits and which always make employers suspicious. Both John and Bernadine were out of work. He would get furious, lash out, walk out. They had to ask for help from John's family. Bernadine was pregnant again. "I don't know what would have happened if it had gone on like that."

Fortunately, through the Bronx Mayor's Office on Veterans Action program, both John and Bernadine have been placed in a public service careers program and are training to be ambulatory care technicians. Bernadine is the only female vet in the class. "We were lucky because they don't like to hire husbands and wives."

Being a vet brought John trouble; being vets now brings them both careers. Bernadine would like to live where there is open space, but for now they will stay put. "I want to help my people; they're your family, too."

Some women leave their husbands in order that their families might survive. When the tyrannies of joblessness, of emotional and of physical wounds occur together, when daily life depends mainly on a woman's stamina, problems can finally become insurmountable.

"When I think about Johnny and me, I think about when he took me out he never danced, but I was just happy standing next to him. We used to go fishing together and go on picnics, or we'd have company in and watch TV. We had fun."

Women are torn between their horror of the war and their loyalty to the men who fought it

Lynn got pregnant, had a baby girl. Johnny decided that he wanted to marry her. "Even though he lived on what he made gambling and what he had left from the service, I loved him. I wanted to get married. We were both raised Catholics and that probably had something to do with it."

Johnny had come back to Waukesha, Wisconsin, with his body full of shrapnel and covered with scars, with chronic pains in his neck and back and head, with a lot of bitterness and a heavy dependence on alcohol. When he'd had enough to drink he'd bring out his uniform and his Purple Hearts and tell Lynn about the war. "It was just tearing him up inside. He'd tell me these gory things. Like once his platoon leader shot a kid in the back. Johnny tried to help the kid, he threw up in his mouth."

He couldn't handle the sound of the baby crying. "I'd just stay awake all night and rock her. He was oversexed. Sometimes he'd want to have relations six times a day. He used to dream he was shot in the neck. One time we were lying in bed watching TV. Out of the blue he threw a beer bottle at the wall and

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But I didn't give up hope. I couldn't. My good looks (and vanity) spurred me on to find a cure. I started hitting the books.

My studies on hair have pointed more and more to nutrition. Major nutritionists report that vitamins and minerals in the right combination and in the right proportion are necessary to keep hair healthy. And one internationally acclaimed beauty and health expert says the best hair conditioner in the world is proper nutrition. (In non-hereditary cases, in which hair loss is directly attributed to vitamin deficiencies, hair has been reported to literally thrive after the deficiencies were corrected.)

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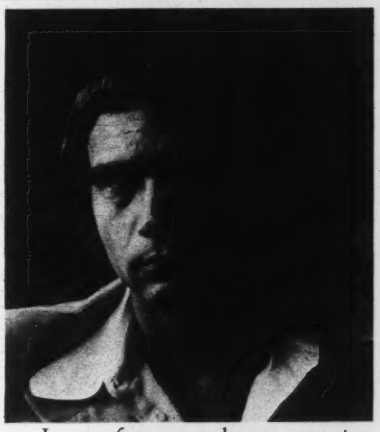

In case after case my hopes were reinforced by professional opinions. (And you know how hard it is to get any two scientists or doctors to agree on anything.)

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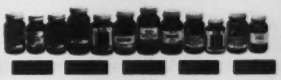

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screamed, 'Look out!' and jumped on top of me. He said he thought he was throwing a grenade. It was a flashback to Vietnam. I know now that other people have them but then I didn't know anything."

Lynn was so run-down she had to take iron shots just to get through the days. Johnny's tantrums and drinking grew steadily worse. Lynn called a mental health clinic; they had a long waiting list. The priest said he didn't believe in divorce or separation; they should try counseling. Johnny wouldn't go. Lynn's mother said she should divorce him. They separated for a while and then Johnny came back to see her. "I felt sorry for him and I took him back."

They separated and got back together four times. Lynn had a son, returned to nurse's aide work, left the kids with Johnny because they couldn't afford a babysitter. When she found out he'd left them in their room all day, she stopped working and stayed home. There was no money. Johnny took his drinking money out of the children's piggy bank. "He'd always be around with only a blanket on, all the time in bed or lying down. The VA hospital said his pains were in his head, but he went to a neurologist who gave him a neck brace and a 14-pound water bag he'd have to throw over a door and use for traction three or four times a day. He complained from morning till night about the pain. The VA gave him some pain pills but they gave him the runs.

"Sometimes when he was drunk he'd tear my clothes off. Once he got so violent I felt like I was being raped. It made me feel like a piece of shit, like I was just there to be abused. Sometimes I'd lock him out of the bedroom, but he'd scream and holler all night and call me a whore or a slut. We had a social worker but I never told him anything. I would have felt like a squealer. Sometimes I'd feel like I would crack up. I'd decide to go to the county home, then the next day I'd think maybe things would get better. I felt like I was being punished, but I guess he did, too. I used to just cry and cry. But deep down somewhere I loved him and I knew he'd had a really hard time. We had two children. I wanted to keep trying. I would agree with him when he was wrong. Once I didn't even say anything when he spanked the children for no reason. I kept thinking someday he'd change. Like planting a seed and waiting for it to grow, but it never happens. When I stop and think about it now, my chest hurts and my heart feels like it weighs a thousand pounds."

During the last reconciliation, Johnny hit Lynn in the face, then threw a glass that landed near their little girl. Lynn called the police and they took him away. It was the last time she saw him.

Lynn wants to go back to work when the children are in kindergarten. Now she's on welfare and the court has ordered Johnny to give her $25 per month. "I'm not liberated at all. I want to be a wife and a mother and make somebody else happy and be happy. That's all I want out of life."

Whomever she marries next, she is positive it will not be another veteran. "If I'm in a tavern and a guy says he was in Vietnam, I never give him the time of day. I don't think they can ever forget what happened to them. They're branded. If they're rejected in any way, they go crazy. As far as I'm concerned, they're walking time bombs."

Other women see special strengths in men who have survived the war. Although we live in a time of choice, when men can refuse to go to war and not be shot, and when women can decide not to reproduce and not be ostracized, a residue of the notion that a mother is more womanly and a warrior more manly remains in many of us. Ellie is a black woman who recently married Gonzalo, an ex-paratrooper who came back from Vietnam with a Bad Paper, anger, nightmares and a habit that he finally kicked in prison. She feels especially drawn to veterans. "I think that a man who has been to war is more keen, more protective. When you're with him you get a feeling of safety. It can even get down to the way a man walks, the way he looks around. It's knowing how to be with a woman, too, a sense of presence but not possessiveness. I always know that Gonzalo did what he had to do and that's why he's alive."

"Vietnam is a tattoo on their brains. You can't get rid of a tattoo. You can only cover it up"

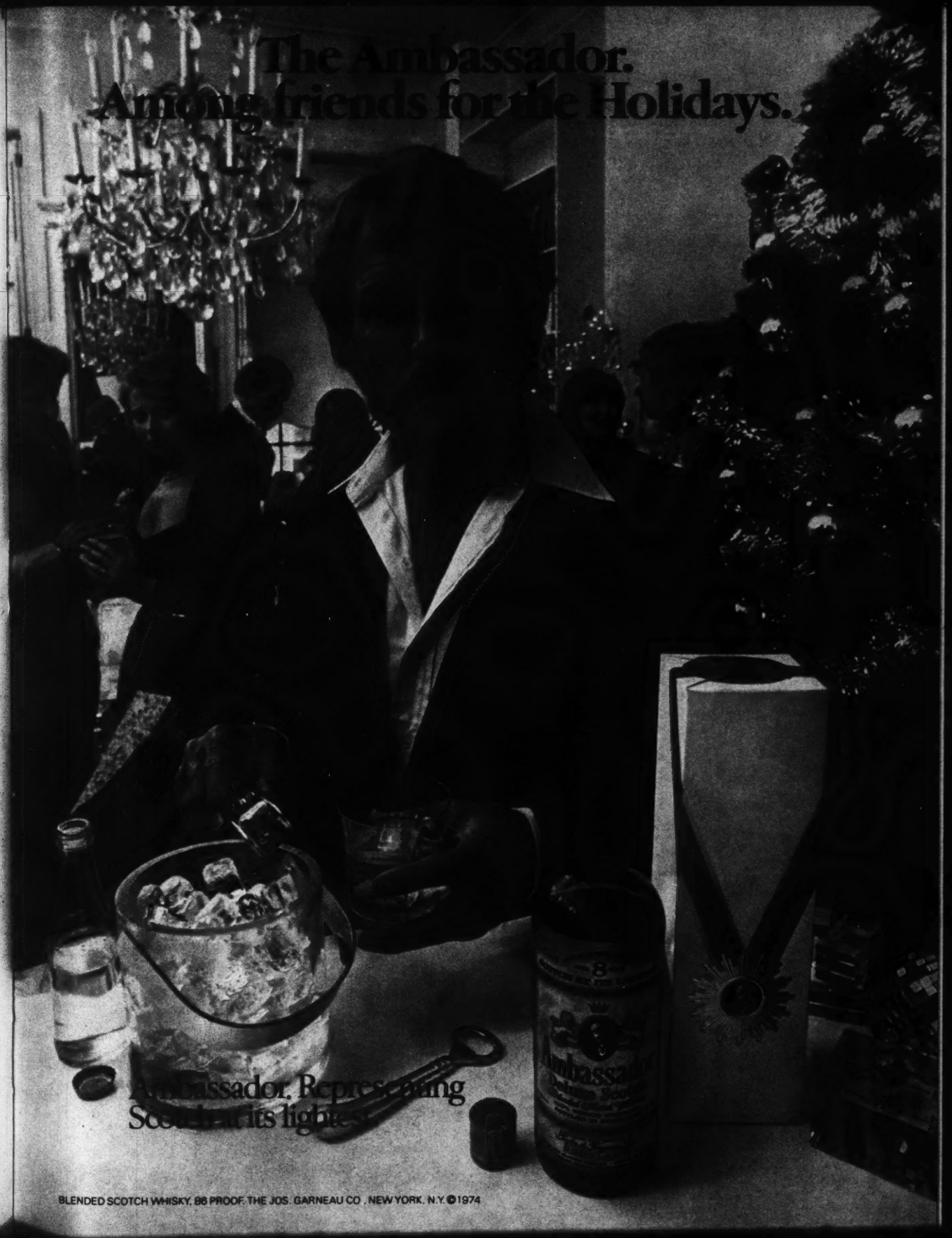
Sometimes problems can become overwhelming because the vet and the woman cannot talk to each other. Laura, 28, a southerner who has moved to Boston, remembers her first visit to her fiancé in the hospital. He had just returned from Vietnam. "It was the worst experience of my life. I got lost. There were all these guys who were missing arms, legs, eyes, were burned, crazy, walking around the halls. It was very hot. I almost vomited before I got to his room. When I saw Patrick I couldn't look at his legs, only his face. I had no idea what our life would be like."

After he was discharged from the hospital, he used crutches and they had to get accustomed to people staring. They never mentioned his missing leg. She wanted to delay the marriage, but people, particularly the priest, cautioned that she was playing a major role in Patrick's recovery. No one asked how she felt, just pretended it was natural when she cried her heart out on her wedding day.

Laura taught school, studied, kept house and had a son."We had sexual problems. I cried every day. I kept busy. I was always running. You can escape thinking, you know." Three years after their wedding they had still never spoken to each other about his leg. "I remember one day Patrick left for work and his prosthesis broke. He had to crawl back to the house. I just thought, how am I going to help this man? He's so helpless. But I begrudged him because I had so much animosity toward his injury. He had to sit in the chair half the day while I took his leg to the shop."

Finally they went to a psychiatrist. They fought for six months, but Laura talked about her feelings and her problems and for the first time understood that she had the option to leave. After a year and half they decided to stay together. Laura's attitude toward Patrick has changed. "I used to feel that I liked him because he was a strong person. Now I feel that he's just a regular person who has something to deal with." They are both more at ease with his injury, but they never talk about Vietnam. "You know, sometimes I have a fear that if anything happened to *my* legs our family would crumble. It's as though my good legs compensate for his."

John Updike once wrote that "women are the heroes of dead lands." On one continent women struggle patiently to piece together what is left beside a rice paddy. Here women live with the tall men who ravaged those paddies. Lynn said it: "Vietnam is a tattoo on their brains. You can't get rid of a tattoo. You can only cover it up." The war rammed its way into our lives. It is lodged in the stumps, the rages, the empty spaces in men's hearts. It smolders along the escape routes of pills and junk and prison. It stalks us through broken dreams, broken bones, broken hearts and broken homes. It haunts us in our land that is dead from deafness and from its own internal corruption, where women go on with the eternal responsibility of bending to pick up the pieces. ●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It isn't easy to panhandle.
But it can be lucrative,
as Omar found out.
So he started a school to teach
the down-and-out the best way to beg

BEGGARS' BANQUET

BY SONNY KLEINFIELD

Eight o'clock in the evening, a Monday, and class is about to begin. The classroom is a rented studio (rather ratty) on Manhattan's West Side. A man is jotting down some last minute notes behind a wooden desk. He looks a little puzzled. He must be the teacher. He has an animated face and lank hair, is somewhere in his late forties. Nine students are on hand. Some are young, some middle-aged. They wear jeans or drab-colored work pants and drab shirts. Some have brought note pads and pencils. They look expectant, curious. From all anyone can tell, this scene could be a college seminar in Early Ukrainian Civilization.

"To begin with," the teacher says, talking so fast he tends to interrupt himself, "I'm here to teach you the techniques of panhandling. What I'm really teaching you, however, is how to be a salesman. What a beggar is doing out on the street is, he is peddling a story, a hard-luck story if you will, but it's still a story. How well he sells that story determines how much money he bags. People don't give away money for nothing. Begging is just like any profession."

This is not Early Ukrainian Civilization. This is Modern Panhandling. Something like that, anyway. It seems that, like everything else, the ancient art of alms-taking has acquired its own vagrant special knowledge. There are techniques to it, a psychology, tricks never before thought of. It is teachable. A character who goes by the name of Omar (he is bashful about his true identity) has gotten the facts together and is teaching it, having built up enough of a following to have kept at it for six years. For $250 (no scholarships, cash in advance) he gives you a one-week begging course, a mixture of classroom instruction and on-the-street drills. In return for extended tutoring, graduates are asked to send Omar 10 percent of their take, once they've recouped their initial outlay, over the course of their first year behind the cup. No dopes, half of Omar's graduates don't bother sending a cent, but he looks on this as one of the unavoidable pitfalls of his trade. "General Motors has the same problem with car dealers who skip town," he will say.

It is not in the least surprising to Omar that he finds himself teaching the ropes to would-be panhandlers. He sees it as a more or less logical progression from his own days pounding the streets. He had quite a palm. In his category of panhandling – that of the professional beggar who is interested in making a decent living off the street, as opposed to the detestable nut who is more interested in a quick bottle of muscatel – Omar figures he ranked as one of the great beggars of all time. He put in five of the biggest years in tin cup annals before retiring to the classroom.

Omar guesses he has already parked more than a thousand panhandlers on street corners, and he graduates an additional 300 beggars

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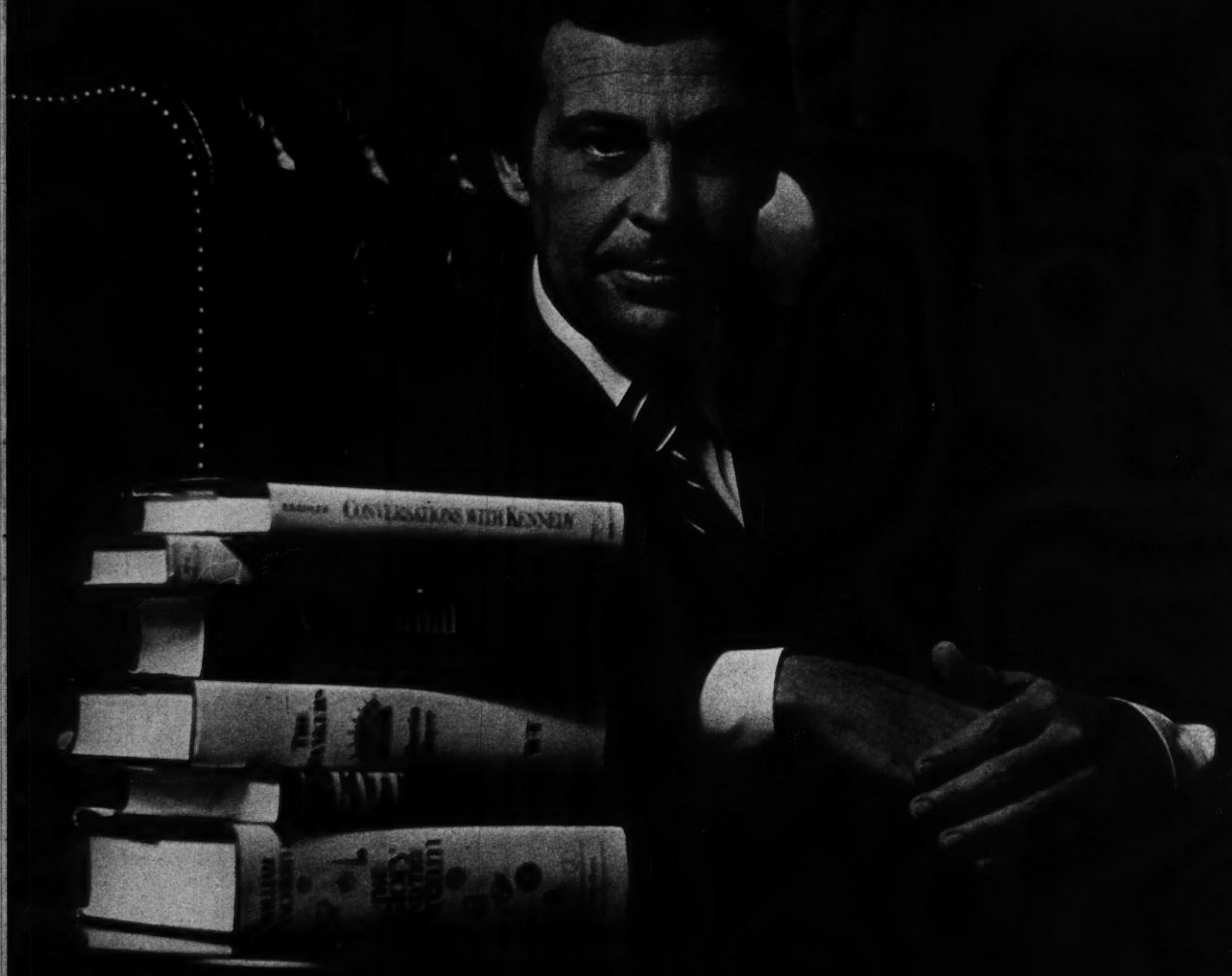

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every year (some, of course, bomb out). With the economy at its depths, beggary is being forced on large numbers of newcomers, which leads Omar to interpret his school as a true public service rather than as the menace it might seem to the people who get socked for the handouts. A choice spot at an express station on the subway, or a busy corner in the theatrical district, may yield anywhere from $30 to $80 for a day's pleading, Omar maintains, and he argues that his trainees couldn't do half as well collecting unemployment or turning out knickknacks in an institution. "I'm keeping people employed, sort of keeping them off the streets by putting them on the streets," Omar says. "I firmly believe begging is an art, but it's also a means to an end. It's not a very proud profession, but it's for people desperate for money. It gets results."

What manner of person goes into begging? "I basically get two types of students," Omar says. "First, lots of young, college-educated people who have been unable to find work, and second, older people who have been canned from their jobs and are fed up with life. Most people learn of me by word of mouth. I'm kind of a celebrity on the street, and sometimes I advertise. Probably close to half my people graduated college. I like an intelligent crew. About 40 percent are women, though women aren't all that aggressive and don't make such hot beggars. With the economy shot to hell, people are pressing at my door. I've had businessmen, scientists, teachers, accountants, you name it. I've had guys laid off from the space project. I had a guy from Seattle who had his own parade float business. People stopped ordering parade floats." Like any conscientious admissions dean, Omar rejects applicants he feels are unpromising. He thinks there are particular attributes to be found in a good panhandler ("gregarious, amiable, slightly flamboyant, one hell of a good liar"). Omar will have nothing to do with cripples—the sightless and legless—choosing instead to work only with able-bodied mendicants. "I don't go in for dangling a wooden leg in people's noses," he says.

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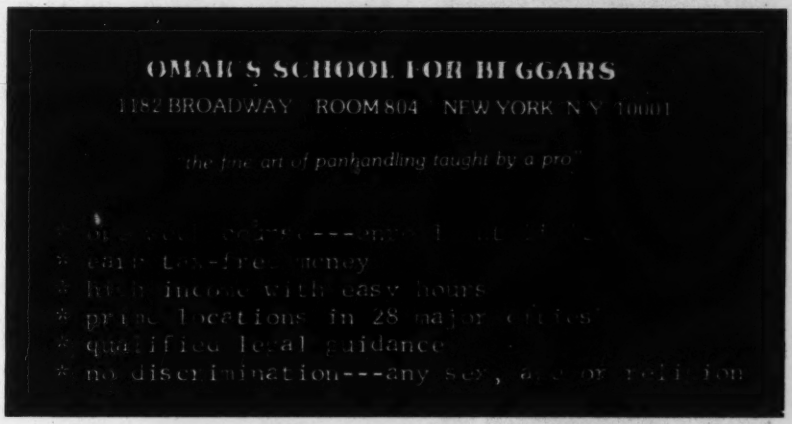

A flier from Omar's school: "Begging is just like any profession."

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Holding aloft some ledger books, Omar informs the class that he possesses a rare body of precise and hard-won information on which are the best spots to beg. "Location is a big thing in this work," he says. The spots are scattered in 28 cities, and students can choose the city of their choice, unless Omar already has too many panhandlers there, in which case they will have to wait for a transfer. One man immediately reserves a street corner in Chicago. A woman puts in for Boston. Omar rattles off what he says his research has shown to be the prime begging areas in the country. Lincoln Center and Maxwell's Plum in New York, the Gateway Center business complex in Pittsburgh, Government Center in Boston, the Hay-Adams Hotel in Washington, the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver and the John Wanamaker department store in Philadelphia (especially nearby what is said to the be world's biggest organ). "I've got the lowdown on lots more places when we get down to assigning work areas," Omar says. What makes a good begging spot, he explains, are heavy traffic in high-class clientele ("the people with the green") and a "captive" audience, one that loiters long enough for a beggar to choose his prospects. The begging atmosphere is no good if people don't stop. Some places get plenty of prospects, but for unknown reasons the handouts are poor. Radio City is an example. "Radio City ought to be a great spot," Omar says. "But it stinks. My beggars starve at Radio City. It's enough to drive some of them to work."

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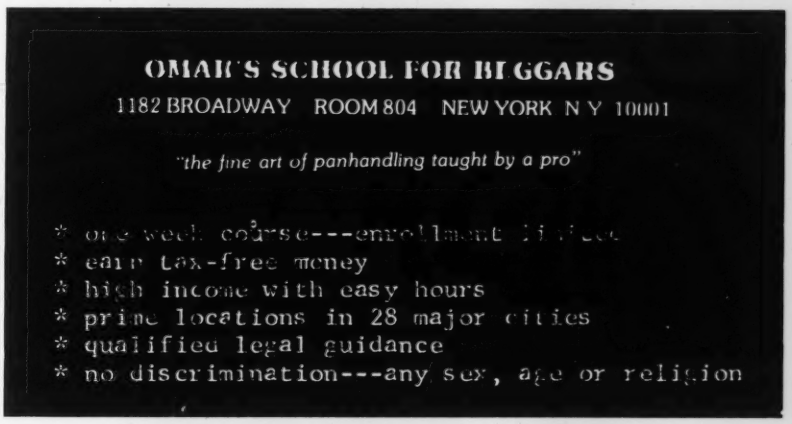
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position at a right angle to the prospect so that the prospect's path won't be blocked, which might lead him to think that it's a stickup. "You have to wipe out any fears with a couple of synchronized motions," Omar says. "You only have a few seconds." The beggar should then look the prospect directly in the eye, to give the appearance of sincerity. He should state his case briefly, politely and convincingly. Omar drills rookie mendicants relentlessly in their form. Watching them as closely as an NFL coach watches an offensive line, he makes sure they are not too brazen or too bashful, but just right.

Panhandlers will spend months developing a convincing tale of woe, for, after all, the sob story is the sine qua non of the begging game. The types of practices in the beggar's bag exist in cornucopian variety, and Omar has dreamed up more than 150 dodges for his students to try. He goes over some of them with the class. There is, of course, the "weeper"—a panhandler with a particularly hard-luck story. A former student named Evelyn is on call to coach novices in how to shed tears. The best method, in Omar's opinion, is to carry an onion wrapped in a handkerchief. Evelyn has fantastic tear ducts and requires no stimulant. She works the Summit Hotel in New York and has shed enough tears to pack her parents and two dogs off to Florida. She pretends she needs money to locate her lost mother. There are the "nibblers," who gaze wistfully into a restaurant or bakeshop while they gnaw at a prop bread crust. They never speak to prospects and depend simply upon their attitude to appeal to passers-by. The "flickers" are beggars who throw fits or pretend to have fainted from hunger.

An alumnus in Columbus, Ohio, who works the Veterans Auditorium there, never bathes. To make matters worse, he drags around a plastic bag filled with horse dung intermixed with vomit. Anyone who has the miserable misfortune to cross his path will be hounded for blocks until he parts with an acceptable amount of cash. This is the "repulsion" dodge. It works exceptionally well—providing you have the stomach for it. Another idea is to act a little wacky, though this tends to frighten off many prospects. Omar says it works well outside a funeral parlor, where grief might be expected to bring on nutty behavior.

For those with an ear for music, loud instruments—the trumpet, in particular—work well in evoking pity, if played poorly. Should a beggar demonstrate any musical ability, a passer-by is likely to think him a musician trying to rustle up extra money. Omar also teaches some lousy magic tricks, lousy baton twirling and some lousy charcoal sketching. If you feel like it, you could go up to someone and offer to sell him a pint of your blood, lofting in his face a jar of what is actually goat's blood, or some such thing.

A friend of Omar's fabricates disguises for him. Her particular specialties are acne made out of balls of rubber cement painted red, stitches made out of fabric and bruises she creates with makeup. These are essential for mugging or car crash victims. Omar also has on hand a foreign-language expert who teaches a smidgen of innumerable tongues—German, French, Spanish, Greek, Russian—so that one can play the foreigner-lost-in-the-big-city spiel. One of Omar's students makes a killing by standing stark naked at the bus stop at 86th Street and Columbus Avenue in New York, preferably on mild nights. He keeps a newspaper to cover his privates. He is a snob in this respect. He only uses the *Times*. He maintains that he was with

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his girlfriend when her husband happened upon them and deposited him on the street. All he would like is some cab fare home.

Another quirky dodge is to pose as a leper. You emerge from a shadowy alley on a side street late at night and stroll toward a prospect with arms raised above your head to show that you aren't carrying a weapon. In a hollow voice, you warn the passer-by not to come too close because you are a leper, and then entreat him to drop money on the sidewalk.

Other students elect to keep strictly within the limits of Jewish communities. In begging parlance this is the "schnorrer," a bearded mendicant who begs at the doors of synagogues, at the gates of Jewish cemeteries and wherever a Jewish wedding is being held. This type of beggar has tradition going for him. According to ancient belief, the giver is blessed for this generosity and by it stores up heavenly credit. Being nondenominational, Omar also offers priests' collars

for those inclined to work the Christian religion.

Omar says he frowns on offering shoelaces or pencils or the like in return for handouts, contending that is retailing, not panhandling. What's more, he feels the tactic so often resorted to by beggars of asking in a whining voice for a "cup of cawfee" is cheap, petty and contemptible evidence of ignorance as well as a lack of ability to use good English. Always ask for money is Omar's motto.

The most durable approaches, Omar tells the class, are two of the most elementary ones: that you require cash to get somewhere and are temporarily down on your luck, or that you lost your wallet. "These situations could happen to anyone," he says. "Everyone, for instance, worries about what he would do if he lost his wallet. It's a damn credible story." What scant research matter there is on the subject of panhandling supports Omar here. In 1968 social psychologist Bibb Latané dispatched teams of Columbia University students on an experiment designed to determine why cynical, hard-shelled New Yorkers gave to beggars. The experiment found that a man who claimed he lost his wallet had an astonishing 72 percent chance of success, the best return of any dodge studied. Coming in second was someone who requested money to make a phone call; he enjoyed a 64 percent success rate. Omar advises his students that it is a good idea to give a name and perhaps home address (both phony) when laying out their tale of woe. The Columbia study bears this out. It found that when an asker gave his name, his handout percentage increased 16 percent. The experiment also determined that a man teamed with a woman did better than a man alone, another ploy Omar suggests in class.

Omar feels that a particular beggar does best sticking to just one routine, rotating places when it gets stale. It is a cardinal rule not to work the same section, and the same people, too often. The alms-giver might grow cynical if he notices the same beggar pulling the same line over and over. In order to cultivate authentic panhandler behavior in a newcomer to the profession, Omar says he will spend some hours alone with each student to get a feel for his personality. From this he will be able to decide what practice will work best for him. "I know a lot about psychology, and this helps me here," Omar says. "After doing this for so long, I've acquired a knack for associating a particular story with a particular type. In my mind I sense, say, that someone is looking for her lost mother, actually believes she is, and so I have her try

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that line. I'm usually right."

Knowing who to approach, and knowing to avoid cranky sorts who are best left alone, is essential to prosperous panhandling. Tourists, Omar says, are invariably good subjects. ("They have spending money. They want to do things that make them feel good. Refusing a beggar is a negative action.") A businessman is an excellent mark, the higher up the corporate tree the better. ("The businessman feels power by giving away money. By paying a beggar, he is showing him that he can afford him. Vicariously, he is stepping on the beggar's face with his heel.") A young couple in their thirties are often good. ("Generally, they're on their way up at that age. They've usually surmounted the obstacles in life and have money.") Anyone laughing or smiling is a good bet. Well-dressed people are logical marks. Convention people tend to be generous. ("Like tourists, they are looking for good times, and they often are on expense accounts.") Foreign dignitaries are superb. ("They feel obligated to be nice to Americans.") Drunks are sometimes good for a big haul, but a drunk would be the first person to go to the police and claim he's been rolled.

"You watch faces," Omar says. "I can tell by looking at a face if the person is prosperous, if he's a kind person who is willing to help out someone in distress. You have to remember the faces you've taken off. You look for the same qualities in other faces. It's no good to hit people randomly. Too many will turn you down. You have to plan who to approach. Remember that during the few seconds in which you go to someone in a heavy traffic situation, dozens of people will whisk by. One of them may have had a twenty dollar bill in his pocket for you."

If a prospect declines to offer anything, Omar recommends that you politely thank him and try someone else. If a student is employing a religious routine, he should remember to bless everyone, givers and non-givers alike. Skirmishes with people solicited should be avoided, Omar tells his students, as they seldom do any good after an initial refusal to aid. Never act with rudeness or discourtesy in cases where one is refused, he says, for that may cause the person to refuse aid at some future time to some other beggar, perhaps a classmate. "I prefer the soft sell," Omar says, "even the negative approach, such as, 'You don't have to help me, but if you do I could really use the money.' This works better psychologically."

The average handout, Omar tells the students, is between a quarter and a folding bill. A good beggar, he says, should get something from half the people he approaches, and he ought to try a hundred people an hour. Omar is very much vexed by the use of a tin cup or tambourine as a collection pot, although these have come to be considered standard begging apparatus. "I recommend no pot at all," he says. "A receptacle is low class. It's a badge of amateurism."

If a beggar makes $40 a day, which Omar contends is low for his graduates, that's $200 a week, $10,000 a year. The money is tax free. A beggar is doing better than many office workers, delivery men, factory people, cops, firemen. Kay, who begs at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, says that in the five months since she finished Omar's school she has averaged $300 a week, and has holed away $2,000 in the bank. Usually in tears, she tells prospects her purse was snatched and she must get to Virginia to see her boyfriend, who is in the Navy. "I was bad at first, but Omar kept me going, and I got good," she says. "I kind of like begging." Nevertheless, Omar says his students rarely beg for more than six months. "They tire of it," he says. "Basically, these are people hard-up for immediate money who would like a normal job if they could get it. This is not the sort of thing someone would feel eager to write home about or to put on a resume."

"Radio City ought to be a great spot," Omar says. "But it stinks. It's enough to drive some of my beggars to work"

Although he rarely works the street himself anymore, Omar has parlayed his school into a miniature gold mine. During each of the last two years, he says, he has grossed almost $100,000. But his expenses are high. He spends as much as six months a year moving around the country checking up on the output of his graduates. His monthly phone bill gets as high as $4,000 (he spends much of his life on the phone), since his newcomers are forever calling him through his answering service from far-flung settings. Their dodge isn't bringing home the bacon, the police are getting awfully suspicious, or they just can't summon the nerve to keep asking people for money like this. Omar often finds himself in the role of amateur therapist, helping his alumni hurdle the considerable mental blocks involved in panhandling. One graduate faithfully calls him nightly from Cincinnati, crying her eyes out. She can't go on another day. She has been going on for nearly a year.

Even with all these expenses, Omar still winds up with $30,000 to $35,000—enough that he can afford to live with his wife and 3-year-old daughter in a spacious Connecticut home. He tells his neighbors he is a consultant. He has two acres, a stream, two ponds, a hundred trees, a basketball court. He keeps an apartment in New York. He vacations in the Bahamas and in Europe. Omar can drink in Sardi's after the theater, shop on Fifth Avenue, dine in three-star French restaurants. Indeed, Omar comes off as an excellent prospect for a beggar.

He does, in fact, often get stopped. Not one to espouse hypocrisy, Omar invariably coughs up anywhere from 50 cents to three bills. "In almost all of the occasions when I've been approached," he says, "the story the guy gives me is so bad I'm insulted, telling me he's got two starving children when he's standing there with liquor reeking on his breath. My people are slick. They're professionals. I only give because I know it takes a lot inside of a person to go out on the street and beg for money."

Omar was born in 1928 in Zanesville, Ohio, a town notable for harboring the only Y-shaped bridge in the world. (Zane Grey was born in Zanesville.) Omar's father operated one of the first discount general stores in that part of the country. Omar graduated from Ohio State with a degree in education, and, for eight years, he taught high school English and band in rural Ohio, quitting in 1958 because of "the dreadful monotony of it all." For several years, he roamed aimlessly around the country, getting what work he could: He sold liquid fertilizer, he drove a taxi, he worked as a travel counselor. Then he went to Florida.

There Omar discovered a life altogether unfamiliar to him, the world of the very rich. Omar became friendly with a host of well-to-do residents of Coral Gables—virtual Santa Clauses—who thought nothing of treating him to meals and clothes and whatnot. Omar began to think that this planet swarmed with folk perfectly happy to offer a handout to someone with a good sob story. During his years on the road, Omar had been continually frustrated by an inability to come up with immediate cash. "I always needed $500 and didn't have it," he recalls. It began to dawn on him that he

might be able to assist others faced with the same predicament, as well as to relieve his own needs. A retired sweater manufacturer whom Omar was chummy with lent him $2,000 in the vague understanding that he would use the capital as seed money to start a school to help the underprivileged.

Omar headed for Miami. There he met a floundering rock singer named George and asked him if he would help him test some begging techniques. "I wanted someone to go out with," Omar says, "because I prefer to be the puppeteer, not the puppet. I'm a teacher at heart." Figuring it some sort of a lark, George agreed. Omar and George went to sports arenas, to parks, to the Fontainebleau Hotel. They went to these places dressed only in their bathing suits. They told people that someone made off with their clothes while they were swimming and they needed cash to get to their hotel. Their hotel was on the other side of town. People gave them money. The first person Omar approached and begged money from gave him a dollar. The first day the two of them cleared $70 apiece. Omar spent three years in Miami. He left it with $20,000 in his tin cup.

"What happened is I became absolutely convinced that this worked," he says. "Begging worked. I was a little surprised. I thought there would be more resistance, more hassles, more run-ins with the law. There weren't. I always felt I was being followed. I was often guilt-ridden, but then I decided that that was foolish."

Leaving Miami and George behind, Omar spent two years visiting more than 50 cities in nearly as many states. He carried out patient and exhaustive research into what were good and bad places to beg and what were good and bad techniques. He wrote everything down. He would arrive in a strange city, get in a cab and order the driver to take him to the gathering places of the well-to-do. New ideas struck him. He started using props: a yarmulke outside B'Nai B'Rith gatherings, a disabled veteran's cap, a priest's collar. He mailed back the $2,000 he had borrowed along with 8 percent interest.

By now Omar had acquired enough self-confidence and capital to strike out and establish a school. He flew to New York and placed an ad in the *Village Voice*. People responded, and in the ensuing six years Omar has busied himself diligently teaching all manner of people to beg, in a gushing and lucrative flow. One of the early respondents to Omar's ads was a woman who had quit a job in which she was required to dress up as a rabbit in a department store to amuse children. Omar married her, never even teaching her the first thing about panhandling.

Omar occasionally considers himself an outcast and feels there is something vaguely shameful about the way he makes a living. His wife, in truth, is not all that happy about it. Other times, though, he views his role in philosophical terms. "I know people who consider me the lowest form of humanity," he says. "They think what I'm doing is despicable. But I don't think so. Our whole society is based on give and take, back and forth, and my feeling is that as long as you don't hurt someone, I don't think there is anything wrong with panhandling. After all, what we all want is our freedom. Begging brings in enough money to give you freedom. And we beggars give more than we receive. The prospect gives a quarter or fifty cents. In return he gets a real boost by being thanked for something and shown a grateful smile. You know, when you come down to it, in one fashion or another we're all really beggars." ●

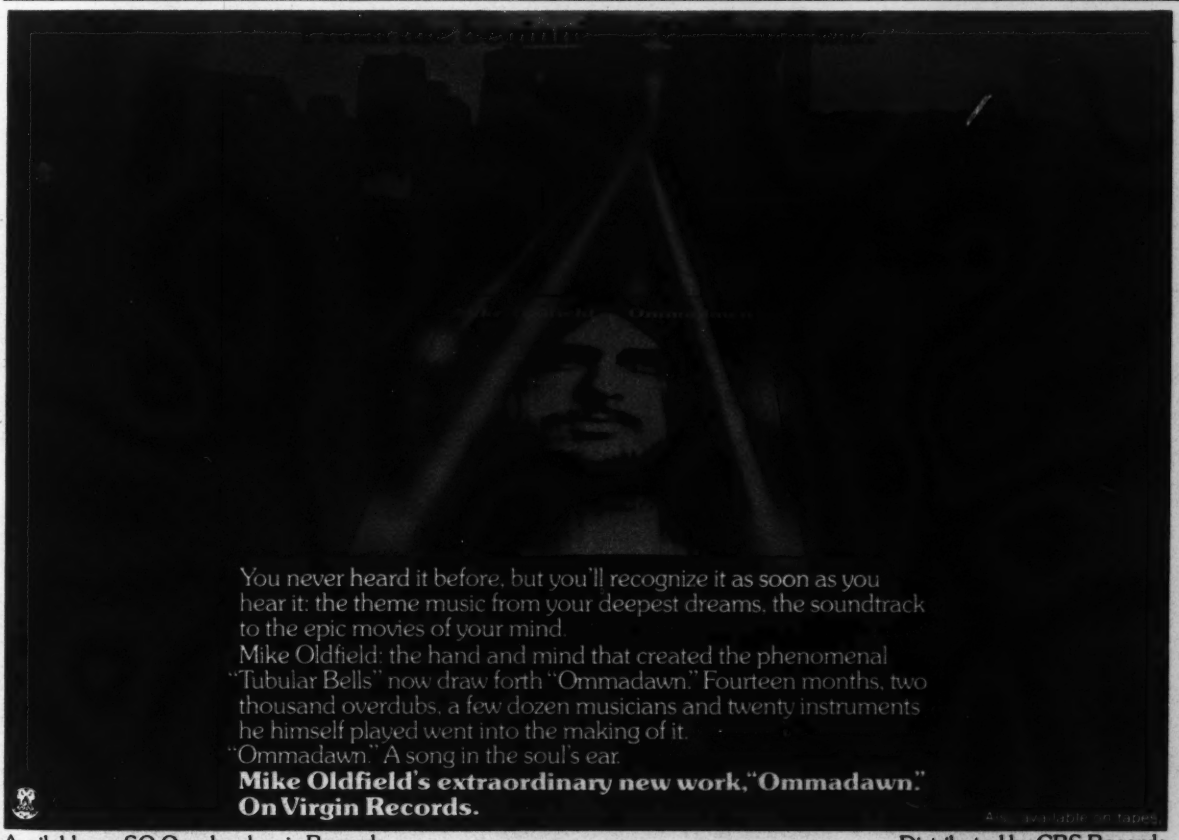
You never heard it before, but you'll recognize it as soon as you hear it: the theme music from your deepest dreams, the soundtrack to the epic movies of your mind.
Mike Oldfield: the hand and mind that created the phenomenal "Tubular Bells" now draw forth "Ommadawn." Fourteen months, two thousand overdubs, a few dozen musicians and twenty instruments he himself played went into the making of it.
"Ommadawn." A song in the soul's ear.
Mike Oldfield's extraordinary new work, "Ommadawn."
On Virgin Records.
Available on tapes.
Available on SQ Quadraphonic Records
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ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT GROSSMAN

SOAP GETS IN YOUR EYES

A REVIEW OF THE NEW TV COMMERCIALS

BY RON ROSENBAUM

Eight years ago a 65-year-old adman with the improbable name Carroll Carroll came up with a terrific idea. Carroll Carroll had just retired from the J. Walter Thompson agency after 35 years in the ad business when Abel Green, editor of *Variety*, asked him what he planned to do with his future.

"Why don't you let me do reviews of TV commericals?" was Carroll Carroll's inspired suggestion.

"Try one," said Abel Green, a bit skeptically.

Carroll Carroll tried two. Abel Green liked them both. Carroll Carroll got his column. It's called "And Now A Word From. . ."; and it's the first and only regular review of TV commercials outside the advertising trade press.

I've always wondered why no one has followed in Carroll Carroll's footsteps. We live in a civilization that supports dozens of TV critics, scores of movie critics and hundreds of rock critics. Everyone knows that commercials are more complex and interesting than TV shows, more people see them than movies and they reveal far more about American culture than rock. Why then is Carroll Carroll alone in his important task?

Well, I've always had a minor ambition to review TV commercials, so this year I decided to see just what the work was like.

Maybe you think it would be easy street, reviewing TV commercials. Maybe you think there are plush screening rooms where the big national advertisers run preview showings of their fall campaigns for journalists. Maybe you think they provide you with transcripts and storyboards of each commercial for

recollection in tranquillity. Maybe you think the leading frozen orange juice tastes more like fresh than Orange Plus.

Just look at the logistics of attempting even the most superficial review of the new season's commercials: Limiting oneself to just three hours of prime time and just three network outlets, that's still 9 hours a night, 63 hours a week, and—figuring 6 commercial minutes an hour, 2 spots a minute—it adds up to more than 750 commercial spots a week. Even though many of those 750 are repeated, so much calculation goes into the making of each second of a single 30-second spot that four or five attentive viewings are required before the craftier elements in its design begin to become apparent. The job is overwhelming.

Most maddening is dragging one's way through hours and hours of pallid programming in search of a second glimpse of just one intriguing new commercial. Maybe someday someone will provide the commercial reviewers—and the commercial fan, for there are fans out there—with a kind of TV guide to commercial scheduling. Maybe someday all steel-belted radials will be made like Firestones.

But for now I'm condemned to sit in front of my set with a cassette recorder and a notebook trying to find ways to fill the time between the breaks. I'll admit I must have missed more than a few: The only way to make sure you've seen every ad is to watch every minute of every show on TV, and the Geneva Convention has rules against things like that.

But I've seen enough and heard enough to pick up on some trends. After listening to 12 hours of pure commercials on tape, you begin to hear the spots talking to each other about certain common themes. In this first venture into commercial criticism, I'll forbear discussions of production, acting and directorial style and start by concentrating on the content of commercials that made their debut this season, specifically some strange new twists to some familiar old pitches.

Country Drug Taking I knew a trend was in the making when Sominex sleeping tablets abandoned the mysterious "Uncle Ned" and other familial sleeping pill spokesmen. Now they've begun presenting cheery morning scenes in rural towns, complete with birds chirping on the soundtrack as several hearty, virtuous, hard-working plain ole country folk take time off from their country chores to confess that "even here," despite long hours of honest work in the fresh country air, people "occasionally" have trouble falling asleep and rely on pills to knock them out for the night. The new Excedrin P.M. spot features a healthy, young country wife, emerging from her old-fashioned country house amidst country-morning sunlight and bird chirps, walking her horse along a grassy creek bed, awake to all the wonder in nature because she went to sleep with the help of Excedrin P.M. And the new spot for Enderin, the non-aspirin pain reliever, presents a couple returning from a walk along a magnificent stretch of shoreline, awestruck by the grandeur of the ocean and by the ability of *just one* Enderin tablet to take care of a troubling headache.

Now, needless to say, the point of these pastoral pill-pushing pitches is not to convince country folk to take more drugs: There aren't enough country folk around to make it profitable. The point is to convince potential pill takers in cities and suburbs that they needn't feel *guilty* about taking pills, that even saintly country folk do it, that pill taking is an integral part of the natural way of life.

In the debate on Original Skin, it's not enough to be clean. Or to smell clean. You have to smell *naturally* clean

The Revolt Against the Natural It's really a counterrevolution. In the past three years, "natural" and "country style" themes have spread like the plague through the commercial industry—let just one brand in a competitive category of products show a cow, and the others would shoot their next spots on dairy farms standing knee-deep in manure.

There's still an element of McCarthyism in the attacks on products accused of being infiltrated with un-natural (as in un-American) ingredients. Spokesmen for products such as Wise potato chips and Dannon yogurt go through "I have a little list" speeches in which they read, in outraged accusatory tones, the names of artificial ingredients on their rivals' labels.

But this year the natural revolution seems finally to have peaked—if only because there are few products left that haven't already been naturalized (in addition to country sleeping pills, we now have Country Dinner dog food). And this season a number of commercials have begun to manifest clear-cut anti-natural, anti-country style themes. One impetus for this trend may be that certain New York admen are thoroughly sick of the hick schtick and are beginning to exact revenge on country folk for the years they've had to spend writing cute country style ad copy. How else explain the unbridled ridicule of the country fellow in the Bic lighter commercial: An oafish hayseed offers to buy an attractive, urban-looking single woman a drink in a dimly lit bar. She lights her Bic lighter, illuminating his clownish, ill-fitting "country style" clothes and cretinous barnyard leer. One look and she laughs scornfully in his face: "A flick of my Bic and I can see you're a hick."

And how about the merriment Madison Avenue has at the expense of the gulled rubes in the Golden Griddle syrup commercial. The spot shows a cross section of country people from "the heart of maple country" tasting two syrups. Time after time they choose Golden Griddle, a non-natural blend, over their own pure, natural maple syrup. And just to rub in the triumph of food processing artifice over nature, the commercial doesn't bother to claim that Golden Griddle tastes *like* real maple; instead they take a deliberately aggressive stance: "Golden Griddle has the taste that *beat* real maple."

And Total—a processed, vitamin-sprayed cereal—takes savage delight in its triumph over "the leading natural cereals" in the vitamin percentage numbers derby. (Total claims a 100 percent RDA score versus 6 percent for the leading brand X granolas.) Sowing salt in the wounds of the defeated wheat, the Total spot takes an airborne shot of a field of wheat, and, lo, the defeat is carved in acre-sized numerals on the face of the field—graffiti in the grain.

The Original Skin Controversy Things move fast in the ad world, and the counterrevolution against the natural revolution has given rise to a sophisticated third stage counter-counterrevolution. This year's Safeguard soap spot, for instance. A bit of background first. Some time ago Ivory soap jumped heavily on the Natural bandwagon and renamed itself Ivory "natural" soap, with spots featuring Ivory-natural people getting themselves clean and fresh without "harsh chemicals." This represented an assault on the whole premise of deodorant soaps, which had boasted for years about just how harsh their ingredients were on "odor-causing

bacteria," those villainous microbes that turned natural sweat into problem perspiration. The Ivory commercials were clearly out to steal customers from the deodorant soaps.

More recently, deodorant soaps began to strike back. By far the boldest assault was last year's Lifebuoy commercial, which featured clean-cut people hopping up and down and crowing, "I smell clean." An admonitory slogan followed: "It's not enough to *be* clean. You have to *smell* clean."

This gets us into some very tricky metaphysical questions of existence and essence: If there were people walking around who *were* clean but didn't *smell* clean, what *did* they smell like? Neutral? Natural? Unclean? What is the smell of clean, anyway? What is the smell of skin? Does skin in its natural state smell good or bad? Did odor-causing bacteria exist in prelapsarian Eden? Could Adam have used an antiperspirant or did the malignant microbes only begin their iniquitous work after the Fall?

If this isn't complicated enough, this year Safeguard has added a new twist to this debate on the nature of Original Skin.

The scene: a kissing booth at a country fair. Two women, one married, one unmarried, are inside the booth. A man buys a kiss from the married woman and exclaims so feverishly over her "naturally clean-smelling skin" that the woman's husband has to intervene.

"What about me?" the unmarried woman in the kissing booth pipes up hopefully. "I use a deodorant soap."

Then the crusher. *"That's just it,"* the kiss-buying guy tells her. "You *smell* like a deodorant soap."

Stunned by this heartbreaker, the rejected woman in the kissing booth is probably unaware of the finely honed distinctions that are implicit in the rebuff.

It's not enough to be clean. You have to smell clean, says Lifebuoy. But, argues Safeguard, there are different *kinds* of clean. Lavatory disinfectant smells clean, but it doesn't smell good. Safeguard skin smells "*naturally* clean," which means it is clean, it smells clean and it smells natural. And natural smells good. But you can't smell natural with a "natural soap." You need a deodorant soap that doesn't smell like a deodorant soap to smell natural these days. The Safeguard commercial takes us from complexity back to simplicity—of a sort.

The next move in the skin smell dialectic is hard to predict. Now that there are "natural-scented" deodorant soaps on the market, perhaps the ultimate step will be the introduction of "natural-

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☐ I cannot "adopt" a child, but want to help $_____.
☐ Or, I will pledge $_____ per month.
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Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

You can "adopt" a child from any of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Syria, Thailand, Uganda, U.S.A.—Appalachian children or American Indians. (Or a child of greatest need.) U.S. gifts are fully tax deductible.

CHILDREN, INCORPORATED

scented" perfume for people scared of smelling like a deodorant soap, worried that their own natural smell isn't good enough and so confused they've decided to forgo the risks of bathing altogether in favor of a cover-up perfume.

New Fears It's been a good year for New Fears. Complex new fears, such as Fear of Smelling Like a Deodorant Soap. Old-fashioned new fears, such as Fear of Foot Odor. (A commercial for a product called Johnson's Odor-Eaters depicts an embarrassed father's foot odor driving him and his family out of their house.)

But the most characteristic fear of the year so far is Fear of Surprise. *Don't let life take you by surprise,* warns Metropolitan Life Insurance. *The best surprise is no surprise,* chimes the new Holiday Inn commercials. "It's the *unexpected* bills that really hurt," warns the doom-tinged voice of the Quaker State Motor Oil announcer.

Holiday Inn, which once promoted the adventure and delight of travel in its commercials, now focuses on nerve-wracking perils—collapsing beds, canceled reservations, unfamiliar food and other unpleasant surprises—which await travelers if they don't play it safe and lock themselves up in the predictability and security of a Holiday Inn.

Auto products such as Quaker State and STP once promoted themselves as lubricants to a life of challenge and daring, even risk. STP was the "racer's edge." Now they all push fear of breakdowns, fear of "internal corrosion" and sell themselves as play-it-safe insurance. It's more than just economic fears; it's a whole new defensive posture toward lifestyle.

Fear of Women The woman is wearing a clinging cocktail gown, she's caressing the shaft of a pool cue with one hand while the other hand rests casually on a pool table littered with balls.

"Some men are intimidated by women these days," she smiles smugly. "Maybe because we're free to do much more. But some men aren't intimidated at all. They enjoy our freedom. Those are the men I like. . . . My men wear English Leather—or they wear nothing at all." Despite the infelicitous attempt at double entendre, the basic message is not sex but fear: The ad uses this caricature of a liberated woman to intimidate men into feeling they have to prove they're not intimidated by women.

And speaking of intimidation, the Wheaties commercial features a woman who beats the pants off her husband on the tennis court, then sits down at a courtside breakfast table and ridicules his slovenly eating habits while he cringes silently behind his newspaper. In a Jeep commercial a woman beats a man to the top of the hill in a king of the hill car race and laughs merrily at his humiliation.

The intimidated wretch is not just a new version of the old, stock henpecked husband. The women in these commercials beat men at their own games and mock them in defeat. One wonders if the real fear message built into all of these ads is that women's liberation inevitably means women's tyranny and male defeat.

There is a new breed of reformist women's commercials, but most of them are either of the "I like housework and motherhood, but I know there are other things in life, so I'm particularly grateful for the fast-working enzyme action of this pre-soak because it allows me to get the family's wash clean more quickly so that I can be an independent woman in my spare time," or they're about slim, determined independent women who have glamorous jobs and drink diet colas.

One wonders if the real message behind the woman-beats-man ads is that women's liberation means women's tyranny

A couple of commercials have recently surfaced that show men engaged in what is traditionally considered "woman's work." But the one liberated woman commercial that truly breaks new ground this season is the Italian Swiss Colony wine ad. Right off the bat the woman in the ad announces that she's separated from her husband and that it's been good for her. "When my husband and I first separated," she says, "I didn't know how to do anything or think I'd ever learn, but I tried and proved I could." She offers as prime proof of her new-found self-sufficiency the ability to choose a wine all by herself with confidence in her choice.

The fact that she's so smug about the superiority of her choice—something called Italian Swiss Colony Chenin Blanc—makes me suspect that her ex-husband had kept her on a diet of Boone's Farm Strawberry up until the separation. But Italian Swiss Colony deserves credit for the forthrightness of its pitch.

Shaving Narcissism An odd little twist in this season's shaving commercials. The two big concepts in shaving spots always used to be "smooth" and "close." The words were used to describe the shave, not the face. Now suddenly it's "love" and "super" and "perfect." And those words are used to refer to the *face,* not the shave.

"C'mere superface," purrs the Noxzema shave cream girl, lather at the ready.

"You took your perfect face and gave it a perfect shave," exults the tuneful Trac II girl for Gillette.

"Send your face to Schick, let Schick love it," a girl singing group urges on behalf of that shaving company.

The visuals reflect this new preoccupation with the perfection and loveliness of men's faces. In shaving commercials of years gone by, once-grizzled men rubbed their newly shaven chins, women stroked their jaws. These days the archetypal post-shave shot shows a man gazing in his mirror, watching himself caress himself.

Is this a retreat from fearsome women into the self-sufficiency of infantile narcissism or adolescent autoeroticism? With such a perfect face and a perfect mirror image to love, who needs a third face to come between the two?

New and Improved Few things are either this year. Retrenchment is all. Once the big rationale for advertising was its ability to educate consumers about valuable new products and improvements they would not know of otherwise. The only new product I noted was something called Egg Baskets, which seem to be pastry shells into which an egg can be cracked and baked if you are inclined to ruin your morning in that fashion.

And there's only one old-fashioned stop-the-presses announcement of a product improvement this year. "GREAT NEWS," says an excited voice. "New Ty-D-bol now has lemon fresh borax!"

Now this might seem anticlimactic to some, and the fact that it's the most exciting "new improvement" of the season may say something about the season. But you have to take into account that the Tidy Bowl announcement is delivered by a man in a glass-bottomed boat afloat in a toilet bowl, and that hasn't been done before.

The Official Cooking Oil of the U.S.

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• Several months ago my father introduced me to HARPER'S WEEKLY and all I can say is, Dynamite! You are a real experience; you bring me in touch with so many others and so many different points of view —**Steff Geiple, Glen Rock, Pa.**

• HARPER'S WEEKLY is habit-forming. I devour it with my Saturday morning coffee. I mean I read the whole thing from front to back, and never mind what other things need doing. I hope some of our politicians read it; I'm sure they would profit.—**Harold Anderson, N.Y., NY.**

• It's heartening to find how many people are articulate. To me they're a refreshing change from the clever journalese of many slick magazine articles. I often feel I want to reply to these contributors, and I will.—**Alberta Cushman, Agawam, Ma.**

• I do not know if I would call your paper a Journal of Civilization, as you do. I would call it a Journal of Thoughtful and Reflective Experiencing (which may be a finer compliment). Good luck with your publication. You are bringing forth a citizen's dream, the establishment's nightmare.—**Stanley L. Brodsky, Tallahassee, Fla.**

• I tried to tell myself "I just don't have time to read it." But HW is the **first** thing I pick up to read—ahead of three weekly magazines, one weekly newspaper, four monthly magazines, and numerous special interest publications.—**Phyllis Maurer, Lincoln, Neb.**

• I have been reading a friend's recycled issues. You win. I surrender. I have just sent my check for a subscription.—**Anne Wittels, Palos Verdes Estates, Ca.**

• After reading my third issue, I feel jubilant and confident that here is a melting pot for the refinement of ideas, and out of it will come much good ... America needs HARPER'S WEEKLY. May it continue to grow and be a "Journal of Civilization."—**Marjorie Sutcliffe, Audubon, Ia.**

• HARPER'S WEEKLY brings me closer to my countrymen who really care about how we live and feel and think. There's integrity in every column.—**Dorothy Martin, Hutchinson, Ks.**

• When my last issue was delayed a few days, I discovered how much I depend on HARPER'S WEEKLY. I was a nervous wreck. **Please** don't ever send my copy late again!—**Robert Nash, Fayetteville, NY.**

• Reading HW is like getting a bundle of letters that really put you in touch. It's great to read contributions from enthusiastic noncoterie writers. The pros couldn't match the diversity, let alone the involvement.—**Maureen Cotter, Newton, NJ.**

• In one year, HARPER'S WEEKLY has given me the courage 1) to write a children's book; 2) teach a seminar for government secretaries; 3) take legal steps to use my maiden name instead of my married name. I wonder whether you ever expected to have such influence on your readers.—**Mary G. Overfield, Henderson, Ky.**

• It was exciting to see my words printed in a national publication. But the best reward was still to come: nine incredibly varied people (aged 18 to 52) took the time to reply personally.—**Christine Parker, Fulton, NY.**

• This issue tells me two things. HARPER'S WEEKLY has good editors and there are **tons** of people out there just waiting to educate me. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. HW is a forum I'd find it hard to live without.—**Carol B. Icard, Dalton, Ma.**

• I am truly amazed at your wealth of subjects. I devour the letters and articles from those who have a compulsion like mine—to share their minds and hearts, to expose their vulnerability a little, to sound off explosively. When I agree, I've found a friend. When I disagree, I've found a reason to re-examine my own view.—**Estelle Pfetsch, Niagara Falls, NY.**

• HARPER'S WEEKLY tells me more about this country and the people in it than a dozen Gallup polls. Congratulations.—**Jack McClintock, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.**

• Send me 20 subscription blanks to hand out.—**Lillian Koslover, Redondo Beach, CA.**

• I'm so pleased with HARPER'S WEEKLY that I sent my renewal check gift-wrapped. Getting HW is like getting a present every week, and I wanted to return the favor.—**Kathleen Marquardt, West Allis, Wisc.**

• By the time my copy arrives on Saturday afternoon, I've read all the other hogwash that came during the week. That makes HARPER'S WEEKLY seem like strawberry shortcake after eating a supper of cold mashed potatoes.—**Darius Petty, Great Barrington, Ma.**

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Olympic Team Something else to keep an eye on are the curious uses to which certain advertisers are putting the U.S. Olympic team. Consider the case of the perfect blower styler.

"Nothing demands perfection like athletic competition," begins a Sunbeam commercial over visuals of athletic competition and a blare of trumpets on the soundtrack. "Serious athletes expect it from themselves, expect it from the things around them." Perfection that is. So far so good.

Then, without transition, comes this portentous announcement: "The Sunbeam Professional Blower Styler. Selected for use by the United States Olympic team."

Wait a minute. Who selected it and how? Did the track and field coaches meet with the other team captains for a big blower styler try out? Or did Sunbeam send a truckload of blower stylers over to the Olympic Committee and get an official Olympic blower styler plug in return? Was there a cash contribution too? (The answer, according to a U.S. Olympic Committee spokesman, is that Sunbeam supplies blower stylers for the entire Olympic entourage and a $35,000 contribution, too.)

Then I noticed that Schlitz beer commercials feature the voice-over of a purported Olympic figure-skating hopeful as she describes the long, hard climb to Olympic glory. She never actually says she drinks Schlitz, but her "style" and "class" are attributes that the Schlitz announcer also imputes to his beer.

It seems to me that if the Olympic Committee is going to get into merchandising they ought to get into it in a much bigger way. Why not an Official Sleeping Pill of the U.S. Olympic team ("Yes, we athletes get real keyed up the night before a game. . ."). The Official Fish 'n Chips dinner of the U.S. Olympics. Perhaps even the Olympic torch bearer frying bread in Wesson Oil to prove that the oil doesn't soak through. The kind of thing you need for credibility.

Up-Front Post-Watergate Morality First A&P led off the season confessing that it had let "Price" get ahead of "Pride," and then pardoned itself for that crime by pledging—it seemed—to raise prices. Now Parkay has leaped into the credibility contest with a totally original ploy. Perhaps remorse inspired Parkay, the shame of all those years when the talking Parkay margarine tub repeatedly and perjuriously told people who opened the refrigerator door that it was really butter.

None of that nonsense in this new commercial for liquid Parkay. The woman in the ad opens up by saying she works for the ad agency that peddles Parkay. She tells us she was skeptical about this liquid stuff when the Parkay people asked her to work on the pitch, but that she conscientiously tried a squeeze or two and found herself utterly knocked out by it. She raved about it so convincingly that the Parkay people asked her—a real advertising person—to be their TV spokesperson.

After all those years of trying to make the public think ads came from "real people" and not Madison Avenue, here's an ad exec to endorse the product. A brilliant turnabout. In a country where the President, the one man charged with the trust of the nation, turns out to be a liar and a cheat, why not promote the ad-man, traditionally considered most suspect and self-interested of all, as the only unimpeachable source of candor we can rely on?

WANTED: ADS

The Commercial Critic invites readers and advertisers to submit ads for review—best, worst, most fascinating, most frustrating, ads illustrating trends or situations worthy of note. Word for word transcripts, accompanied by visual descriptions and the date and time of airing are preferred. Please send the ads to: TV Commercials, New Times, One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

Some people say the Golden Age of TV Commercials came to an end with the end of economic expansion and that thereafter nothing has approached the imagination, inventiveness, intelligence and cash expended on the finest of the late Sixties spots. And it's true that the TV commercial world this season is filled with signs of recession and regression: more dumb dishwasher demonstrations, contrived car comparisons, hideous "hidden camera" slices of life. But there's one genre that's entering a Golden Age all its own these days.

The inspirationals You know the ones. Generally they have a large, vibrant chorus filling the background with a strong upbeat tune. Half-hymn, half-marching song, they are the national anthems of their products. On the screen energetic people of all races, colors and creeds do energetic things such as jogging, marching and eating fried chicken while singing their anthem, or getting ready to burst into song. The United Airlines commercial is about a group of strangers riding an airport limo bursting into the "Mother Country" anthem. In other ads whole towns filled with jolly oldsters, rollicking youngsters and peppy people of all ages explode into tuneful, muscular joy on the screen.

The Inspirationals are all so infectiously entertaining it's hard to choose among them. McDonald's "Good morning, America!" breakfast commercials never fail to wake some sparks of innocent morning joy in me no matter how tired and wasted I am. The Beauty Rest "Good Day" anthem is almost as good. Colonel Sanders' "Real Goodness" anthem, STP, 7-Up, even, I'm ashamed to say, Coke's "Look Up America"—they all get to me. Some of them get to me too much. The Sanka anthem, for instance. I spent two miserable weeks this fall trying to get the Sanka anthem to stop repeating endlessly in the back of my mind. The tune's okay, but the lyric somehow doesn't live up to the soaring tones of the choir-like chorus. One feels a bit silly walking around town with a choir chanting in one's head: "WE'RE THE THIRD LARGEST COFFEE IN AMERICA."

Whence comes the revivalistic outburst in TV commercials this year? Is it a depression-induced Happy Days Are Here Again/Gold Diggers of '33 trend designed to get depressed consumers happy enough to spend what little they have? Is it a bicentennial rebirth of Whitmanesque celebratory optimism? A secular Great Awakening (most of them are anthems of the morning)?

Or is it something more calculated, like the pepped-up Muzak fed to workers in big factories just before closing time? Is there something even darker behind all this upbeat hysteria, a sense of some more final Closing Time closing in on America?

Perhaps those darker notes are there, but no matter how suspicious I get about them the new Inspirationals never fail to work their happy-making magic on me. That's what makes them so impressive, even scary. Inspirational technology has grown so sophisticated and powerful that TV commercial makers are capable of making one feel happy, *naturally* happy, without any sense of being manipulated into feeling happy. Something like the feeling you get from the deodorant soap that gets you naturally clean without making you worry that you smell like a deodorant soap. ●

Dylan demystified: Rolling Thunder in New England

By Janet Maslin

Most stories about Bob Dylan are hard to believe, but here's a good one anyway, from a puzzled but reliable source. A few days before the Rolling Thunder Revue touched down in Plymouth, Mass., an outfit called Zebra Films was on hand to capture the initial flurry of excitement. The filmmakers hoped to include in their documentary about this latest and most unusual Dylan tour footage of the mad rush for tickets to two shows, which had been announced only through scuttlebutt and handbills. But, much to the crew's surprise, there was hardly any rush at all. Attributing this freakish lull to a breakdown in communication, the outfit sent somebody around to various local hangouts, spreading the word that Dylan, Joan Baez, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, et al., were indeed on their way. Reaction was *still* disappointing. Some of the kids just blinked in disbelief; others listened politely and then wanted to know when certain noisier groups, such as Aerosmith, would be coming to town.

Providence, where initial response was similarly low-key, is a hell of a place to spend a rainy Thursday morning. But a telephone tip-off had sent me hotfooting down from Boston at the crack of dawn, hoping that tickets for the following Tuesday could still be had. Though a phone call to the Providence Civic Auditorium's box office had been encouraging (*lots* of tickets left, the lady said), the *Boston Globe* had already blown the whistle by announcing the show, and, even worse, the Civic Auditorium's marquee—which faces the main highway out of town, the most sensible route anybody in Providence can take—kept flashing "Dylan and Friends" for all to see. But the line at the box office proved to be only six bodies long, one of them that of a 3-year-old child who would presumably not be attending the performance.

To grasp the full eeriness of all this you need only recall the last tour, the one that marked the Big Comeback in the early months of 1974. Preceded by reams of publicity, Dylan and The Band appeared in huge, three-ring-circus-style halls, playing to both the misty-eyed ("We've got Our Bobby back again!" rang the prevailing sentiment) and the privileged (as with the World Series or the hottest show on Broadway, garnering tickets had as much to do with status as with enthusiasm). And Dylan himself, roundly upstaged by The Band, grappled with his role as a museum piece by striking a pose of arbitrariness and defiance. He didn't just sing, he bellowed. His new phrasings, apparently devised as a show of ferocity, involved paying undue attention to the letter *i* (as in "don't think *twiiyce*, it's all *riiyte*") and hammering out the last syllable of every line. Sometimes it worked; when the audience joined in on "Like a Rolling Stone," crying "How does it *feel*?" over and over again, Dylan's style made sense and his energy seemed real. But afterward, when it came time to wonder what the whole thing had signified . . . well, you know the one about the sound and the fury.

It's hard to imagine a more drastic turnaround. If the last show presented Dylan as a feisty relic, the relative intimacy of the Rolling Thunder Revue's smallish, surprise-party concerts has brought out the team player in him, the ordinary Joe, the *People* coverboy. "It was never my intention to become a big star," he remarked to that publication during a rare and curiously folksy interview. "It happened, and there was nothing I could do about it. I tried to get rid of that burden for a long time. I eat and sleep and, you know, have the same problems anybody else does, and yet people look at me funny."

Sitting in the audience in Providence, watching a show so intense it made me feel less like a spectator than a voyeur, I was hard-pressed to remember that there was any more to it than that. Through the course of three and a half hours, the concert never lost its celebratory mood or compromised its simple, almost casual brilliance. (I've heard that the first half-hour, featuring a set by Dylan's friend Bobby Neuwirth and his band, was disappointing, but the Rhode Island rush hour prevented me from finding that out firsthand.) Ramblin' Jack Elliott, a ragged stylist whom the young Dylan studied and subsequently left in the dust, followed Neuwirth with

Dylan as an ordinary Joe: "It was never my intention to become a star."

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN J. SHERMAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN J. SHERMAN

Confreres Baez and Dylan: Spooning and spoofing in a semblance of intimacy.

some bland but amiable versions of songs nobody east of Haight-Ashbury ever liked in the first place (Kristofferson's "Me and Bobby McGee," the Grateful Dead's "Friend of the Devil").

And then out strolled Dylan, unexpected and unannounced, to begin his segment of the show with a choppy, electrifying "When I Paint My Masterpiece." Like every old song he resurrected that evening, this one had been rearranged, and was exuberantly played, infinitely more energetic than it had been on record. The most supercharged of the retreads was "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," set to the playful rhythm of "Rainy Day Woman," its sense of growth and regeneration even more striking than that of some of the new material. Many of the songs, regardless of vintage, carried a newly hot-blooded strain, what with Scarlet Rivera's gypsy violin and various hints of mariachi, tango and bossa nova rhythms. "Chiquita Banana," whispered someone nearby, at the close of a new number Dylan had dedicated to Sam Peckinpah.

The show ran remarkably smoothly, with intermission lasting only long enough for the crowd to catch its breath. Then the lights went down, the curtain came up and there were Dylan and Baez singing "Blowin' in the Wind," threatening to swamp the place with a wave of Newport nostalgia. But this show was far too immediate to coast on its audience's reminiscences; besides, Dylan and Baez seemed fully absorbed in memories of their own. Singing an old love song ("The Water Is Wide") together, dressed alike (white shirts, dark pants and vests, Dylan in a gaucho hat with a feather), they lunged symmetrically into the microphone as they sang, gazed tenderly into each other's eyes and had me lost in the kind of thought I usually attribute to Rona Barrett (though later reports indicated their backstage behavior was considerably cooler). More important, they had the whole crowd feeling as though it had somehow wandered into somebody's private home.

As they sang "It Ain't Me, Babe," Baez put down her guitar so she could hang one arm around Dylan's neck. Then he kissed her and left, and she sang her finest song, "Diamonds and Rust," which is about her being tempted to resume some kind of relationship with him. She also sang virtually every other song of passion she had ever been associated with ("Love Song to a Stranger," "Long Black Veil"), plus a beautiful a cappella "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." That brought back memories too; when Baez had performed it at Woodstock, wearing close-cropped hair and a prim little pastel dress, she looked matronly and remote. Tonight she was radiant, drawing a wild ovation from a crowd that had never expected to be so thoroughly won over.

Dylan returned, this time opening with a quiet, exquisitely sung "With God on Our Side." (He was in superb voice throughout the show, just as he has been since the last album.) He had been jubilant during the first half, even chatty, bouncing restlessly on the balls of his feet and sometimes dancing a twitchy little jig. Now he moved with less joy but more urgency through new material, most notably his sobering ballad about Rubin "Hurricane" Carter and a heartbreaking elegy to his marriage, which is rumored to have come undone. (Understandably, there was nothing from last spring's *Blood on the Tracks* included here; that album, centered on his failing marriage and imbued with the shock and disappointment of recognition, must seem sadly dated to him now.)

"Just Like a Woman" grew into "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," wearily eloquent, as Dylan shared the vocals with his old friend Roger McGuinn, who had earlier appeared to do "Eight Miles High." It would have been a perfect finale had not the whole entourage—Dylan, Baez, Elliott, McGuinn, Neuwirth, Ronee Blakley, Allen Ginsberg, bandleader Rob Stoner and Mick Ronson, who played piercingly beautiful guitar throughout—decided to one-up themselves with a version of "This Land Is Your Land."

Packing away a wad of damp Kleenex, I wandered home thinking about Dylan's formidable mystique, which had been on a convenient lunch break for the duration of the show. Actually, Baez had said it best, affecting a cracked, geriatric voice as she joked about Newport. "Yes, I remember," she cackled. "It wasn't such a short time ago, dearie, but I remember." And then she added, "I was the world's madonna . . . Donna, Donna . . . but that's all changed now. Thank God."

Though the Rolling Thunder tour had been touted as Dylan's attempt to restore some measure of manageability to the rock concert format, it also seemed to be serving the more private purpose of temporarily demystifying him, affording him the luxury of normalcy, plus a rare clarity and simplicity of expression. Perhaps that was enough to account for his obvious jubilation.

A day and a half later, still in something of a trance, I heard a radio ad that made me wonder whether I was fully awake. "You all know the legendary Bob Dylan," it began, going on to say that good seats were still available for that afternoon's pit stop in Springfield. (That performance, like the two in Providence, was never fully sold out.) I contemplated driving a 200-mile round trip to see the show again and decided there was nothing I would rather do.

This set was a little different, but the spirit was the same—*exactly* the same. Once again, Dylan and Baez matched; once again, she removed her guitar to hold him during "It Ain't Me, Babe"; again they kissed once during their set. As at the other show, the loudest ovation of the evening came when Dylan picked up his harmonica (some things *never* change). The band, which had seemed so loose it helped catalyze Dylan's good cheer, was looser still, and the performers more playful than ever. "We wanna do this one specially today. A tune written by Johnny Ace. It's a request," explained

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Dylan before yet another romantic duet. "A request by Bob Dylan," added Baez, laughing. "Who's out there *somewhere*," Dylan continued, peering into a throng of extremely happy admirers.

Here, as in Providence, emotionality and ease were as central to the show's effectiveness as was Dylan's musical rejuvenation. But it took me a second trip to realize that Dylan was using the audience as skillfully as he used the band—and that, far from seeming manipulative, the show was all the more overwhelming for it. The spooning with Baez, the frankness and detail about his marriage and his past (Dylan's song to his wife mentions that he wrote "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" for her in the Chelsea Hotel), the recasting of somber old material in newly lighthearted terms—it was all part of the act, all part of the semblance of intimacy. Whether Dylan's real feelings are reflected in any of this is immaterial, although it's impossible to imagine his giving such inspired performances while faking the high spirits. The point is that even if this tour is meant to be uncharacteristically honest and impassioned, Dylan isn't free to get up there and just be happy—in order to get it across, he has to labor at *seeming* happy, too. That burden he spoke of, the burden of being Bob Dylan, means that he has to work especially hard at what would, for anyone else, be the easy things.

And that weight also means that however hard he tries, however firmly he insists he's just plain folks to *People* or *Redbook* or the *National Star*, no one is likely to believe him. The Associated Press managed to report on the Rolling Thunder troupe's visit to the University of Vermont in an article detailing Hubert Humphrey's stopover there. Humphrey visited a Democratic Party fund-raiser and invoked the memory of "the embattled farmers of Lexington and Concord." And as for the other guests, well, a decade may have gone by, but in some quarters they're still folkie firebrands after all. "Dylan and Baez sang of social revolution," noted the AP, "saying if parents, politicians and writers did not become a part of the changes, time would sweep them aside."

Books

Snookered

By Geoffrey Wolff

King of the Gypsies *by Peter Maas.* Viking (171 pp., $7.95).

No one really knows anything about gypsies, except that their racial title means "Egyptians," which they aren't, and that their name for us—*gadje*—means "barbarians" or maybe "yokels." Gypsies endure and prevail by confusion: Most of the nations of the world have tried at one time or another to drive them across their frontiers or kill them off or pen them in. And most of the nations of the world leave off their programs of persecution and exclusion with egg on their faces. (The Nazis during World War II managed to exterminate half a million gypsies, but the race survived even within the borders of Germany.)

Peter Maas, who wrote *Serpico* and *The Valachi Papers*, is no stranger to hard investigative work. He has made his way in the world, and nicely, by telling secrets his subjects don't wish told; he has cracked the Mafia and the New York Police Department, but what he was unable to learn about gypsies would fill a book, this book. Gypsies don't read or write, so they pass along what they know by mouth, adjusting and embellishing as it suits them, leaving their history undocumented save by the sociologists and anthropologists and investigative reporters they so love to gull. They lie about their names and ages as well as their customs and motives; they have elevated deception to the level of a first principle.

Maas is a good sport about the use to which he was put by the people he chose to write about. He was snookered coming and going by the hero of this book, Steve Tene, named king of the Gypsies by his grandfather King Tene Bimbo shortly before the old man's death in 1969. Steve Tene believes, or says he believes, that ancient gypsy customs of outlaw exclusiveness should give way to a new spirit of assimilation, that gypsies should begin to invite their absorption into American society, that they should take regular jobs and send their kids to school and give up crime. It is not surprising that Maas would be attracted to such a potent subject as acculturation, especially as it is spiced in the instance of Steve Tene by the even more theatrical subject of parricide.

PHOTO: FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Gypsy queen and daughter: In their world deception is the first principle.

Steve Tene hopes to murder his father, just as his father has several times tried to murder him. At issue is the line of succession from King Tene Bimbo, over the head of his son, to his grandson. Among gypsies, moreover, kingship is a vague concept, or vague according to *gadje* measurements. Some gypsies accept Steve Tene as their leader, but many more do not. He is, in any case, a most reluctant leader whose position was thrust upon him against his wishes. Or so he says.

Fact is, it is impossible to determine what he believes. He has lied many times and for many reasons to Maas, who throws up his hands in exasperation and in respect. Maas does know that Steve Tene, who lives in Los Angeles, fights violently with his immediate family, which lives here and there in the East. He knows that Tene's own aunt has tried to frame him on an attempted murder charge in New York. He knows that Tene was a male prostitute, the wheel man in a number of muggings and scams and a confidence man. (Tene's specialty is the faked accident—tripping and falling on the slippery floor of a supermarket or movie theater, followed by a settlement from his hospital bed.)

Maas writes that this story was the most difficult he has yet undertaken: "Some gypsies I interviewed lied to me outright. Others lied to me without knowing that they were lying, since a number of them are more credulous about their own myths than any outsider could ever be. Most insidious of all were gypsies who sat before me trying to figure out what I wanted to hear and then gravely supplied it. Finally there were the gypsies who told an objective truth, but how was one to know this?"

Steve Tene lied for all of the above reasons, and sometimes told the truth too. He no doubt grasped that Maas was on the hunt for a story not unlike the story Gay Talese told in *Honor Thy Father*, the story of a tribe in transition, the son repudiating the customs of his father, breaking through thick accretions of contempt for the society at large. One night, after some girls in his family had brutally mugged an old man and he had been a kind of accomplice, Steve told Maas that he lay awake, worrying and suffering guilt, and decided to change his way of life: "He had been bothered anyway by the restiveness of his life . . . all he seemed to do was to move in circles, just existing, and he thought, where the hell am I going?" So he decided to go legit, to enter the furniture refinishing business. But to set himself up, he faked another accident, "tripping on a piece of torn carpet and falling spectacularly down a flight of stairs in a movie theater." For this he knocked down $2,500, having claimed "a concussion, impairment of balance and a dislocated disc." He later put the sleeve on Maas for $700 and used him and his name frequently to win favors from the police.

But while telling of even the most brutal of gypsy crimes, respect steals up on Maas, and it is difficult to resist sharing it with him. Gypsies are survivors, bold and brassy, quick on their feet. They refuse to play by rules they did not make, but among themselves set a complicated standard of respect, deference and decorum. They bend, tear and spindle their conventional identities and records at every opportunity. They are play actors of extraordinary ability and prey on the gullible. When it suits them, they gull themselves: Most of them believe that somewhere in the Bible, which they cannot read, gypsies are given permission by Christ to steal, because a gypsy stole the nail meant to have been driven through Christ's heart as He hung on the cross.

Maas does his work as well as a reporter can, asking the right people the right questions, running his recorder under their words, trying to check out what they say, trying to get at the truth. The result is a most entertaining confusion. The entire purpose of gypsy life, it would seem, is to confound the dutiful. As long as no one knows what a gypsy is, no one can find a gypsy or lock him up or gas him or drive him across another frontier.

At King Tene Bimbo's funeral, hundreds, even thousands, appeared from nowhere, bringing flowers to his body, sneaking money and booze into his open coffin to make his passage into the next world—where he would flimflam St. Peter—more comfortable. The flags of the United States and the Soviet Union were borne during the procession. "Onward Christian Soldiers" was sung, as was "So Long, It's Been Good To Know Yuh." There was a traffic jam. When someone expressed surprise at the numbers there to honor him, a New York City detective said, "They're not here to honor him. They just want to make sure he's dead." Maybe he wasn't. With gypsies, bless them, you can never know.

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Movies

Distant Thunder: Power and terrible beauty

By Nik Cohn

The river is full and refreshing; the young women bathe. As they splash about in the sunlight, a plane flies overhead, a flying ship, as they call it, on its way to war. But the war is far away, has no reality. The young women laugh.

A little later, as they make their way home through the woods, they see a man watching them from across the fields. One side of his face is hideously deformed by burning, the other smooth and beautiful. He watches without expression and the women shudder, avert their faces. A gathering wind stirs the long grass. A thunderstorm is approaching. Hastening, the young women return to their village, where they are safe.

This is the opening sequence of Satyajit Ray's *Distant Thunder,* the most original cinematic vision of war that I can remember seeing. It is based on the Indian famine of 1943, in which 5 million people died partly because of drought, partly because of official bungling, but mostly because essential stocks of rice were reserved for the army, fighting World War II across the border. The man-made famine, Ray calls it, in a brief printed postscript, and his film deals with its effect on one small village.

Throughout the picture, the war in question is never shown, exists only as rumor, an inexplicable curse much too far away to be more than a word. To the villagers, it is no more than that flying ship, a mirage, passing overhead. Yet it destroys them as utterly as though it had blown them sky-high with bombs.

The central characters are two Brahmans, a young man and his wife, who have only recently arrived. The husband, smugly aware of his caste superiority, condescends to the villagers as teacher, doctor and sage, and at first, when the shortage of rice appears, he cannot take the situation seriously. Brahmans do not starve, after all. Real suffering is for others.

At this juncture, when an old man from another village tries to sponge off him, the Brahman turns him away in contempt. Born to stand apart, he will not be involved, sucked under by the mass. But as the film progresses, slowly, agonizingly, that sense of remoteness begins to crumple.

The shortage increases. The villagers, cheated of their rations, riot, and the Brahman, against his own first instinct, gets dragged in. Soon he is reduced to sponging for himself, begging from the local elder, who is hoarding supplies.

His wife, who has never worked, now labors with the other women. The husband walks 20 miles through the midsummer heat because rice has been rumored to be in another village. Vagabonds, bone-thin nomads, begin to wander the countryside like an endless plague of leeches. The wife catches pond snails, digs in the forest for wild potato roots. She is almost raped by one of the vagabonds, while her closest friend, in exchange for food, gives herself to the man with the burned face. Her sister arrives from their native village, to die beneath a bush. A lurking child steals the last potato root. Now nothing exists, no thought or feeling, beyond hunger. And the husband can only watch, helpless, broken, all

Brahman and villagers: In starvation, if in nothing else, there is equality.

Brahman aloofness long since collapsed.

At the end, the same old man that he spurned in the beginning returns, this time with his 11 relatives. The husband takes them in. Indeed, he has no choice. His wife tells him that she is pregnant, full with a child that has no future. Still they cleave together, embrace for reasons beyond logic. All sense of withdrawal, of false distinction and pride, has disappeared. In starvation, if in nothing else, there is equality, and in the last shot of the film the silhouettes of the old man and his family multiply into a numberless mass, black against the light, moving dumbly, blindly, like diseased cattle across the land.

This is not a film that I find easy to discuss. It has inescapable flaws. Too much symbolism, too many arty shots of long grass hissing in the wind, butterflies fluttering feebly upon the parched earth, tragic beggars at twilight. The ending comes far too pat, with a note of United Nations uplift wholly inappropriate to the true situation; and the last shot, I think, is pure self-indulgence, as shallow and slick as that advertisement for Coca-Cola, "What The World Needs Today," in which all the races of the earth are joined in universal ecstasy, hymning the Real Thing.

I mention these points in duty, because they seem true and I must, I suppose, make some attempt at objectivity. *Distant Thunder,* like all Ray's films, is easy to satirize. By Western standards, it moves slowly, makes its points without snap, often seems cumbersome and naive. Yet, in the end, none of its blemishes means a thing. For every moment of bathos, there are ten of such purity, such power and terrible beauty, as to make all objections obscene, a pedant's dead carping.

It is, above all, a film of the senses; it works through the nerve ends and nostrils, the taste buds, the entrails. In its spell, one feels scorched earth beneath the feet, is blinded by the brightness, despairs at the infinite space. Time means nothing here, and conversation is no more than a ritual exchange of symbols. One's pace slows to a crawl. As the famine grows, the throat gets dry, the blood congeals. There is real need, hunger in the gut. And after the film is ended and one trundles out into the city, there is a moment when one fails to recognize its signs, cannot conceive how one got there.

This is one of the hallmarks in any true work of art: It draws you utterly inside its own world. In *Distant Thunder* the achievement is especially great because the world is so alien, so hopelessly remote from our own. At any rate, I have seen it three times so far, and, at each new viewing, it seems to me finer, more rare. I cringe to a babble of greatness, genius, a masterpiece, all those gruesome catchpenny headlines. But in this case, no other words will do. *Distant Thunder,* I think, is very special indeed.

Is *Lisztomania,* the latest of Ken Russell's masturbations on a theme in B flat, the worst film ever made? No question, it plumbs depths of vulgarity, pretension and pure pop mindlessness that place it high on the list of contenders. Indeed, it sustains a level of such cosmic God-awfulness that, when I first saw it, I was stunned, could find no words to describe it.

Fortunately, someone else has described it for me. A few days ago, the soundtrack album appeared upon my doorstep, and its sleeve notes, uncredited, capture the film's essence, its atmosphere and soul, far better than anything I could say. Therefore, with gratitude, I quote: "No question about it, Franz Liszt (1811-1885) was one *helluva* guy. Though no one (to our knowledge) ever called him Frankie, Liszt was a bona fide heartthrob, a teen idol of the first magnitude. In fact, you might (and we will) describe Franz as The First Popstar! He had young girls swarming all over him in his concert tours, which moved regularly from one end of the European continent to the other, and he was a performing star from the age of 11 or 12, filling big halls and making the various European equivalents of big bucks. Franz, ever big-hearted, even did benefits. He had it all; hordes of female fans, piles of lucre, good looks, good times and. . .

". . .Talent! Yup, Franz had the creative goods to back up all the flashiness. He was a heavy dude in the eyes of the critics and his fellow composers (like Richard Wagner, f'rinstance); he had great chops on his axe, the (acoustic) piano—he played his slim little arse off. It's said, in fact, that to demonstrate his virtuosity, Franz used to play difficult piano pieces while at the same time enjoying a piece. . .uhm, while simultaneously engaging in sexual congress—evidently those double-header performances went over big at parties. Forget those tired, dreary history books you had to read in school—the Nineteenth was a very *hip* century. And foxy Franz Liszt led the kind of life inhabitants of the Twentieth Century can easily relate to, right?

"Ken Russell is pretty hip, as Twentieth Centurians go, and he related so deeply to Liszt's story that he decided to make a movie about it. . . .

"Rapidly and with typical Russell chutzpah, *Lisztomania* came together. And though the fanciful and flamboyant aspects of the film contribute greatly to its impact, it should be noted that for the most part, *the film is historically accurate.* Yes, friends, what we have here is a Real Movie about Real People.

". . .What Russell, Rick, Roger and Ringo have done is to grandly bring together the full flash, freakiness, flourish and fanfaronade of two parallel epochs separated by 150 years. Lisztomania, indeed. Like Liszt's party trick, it's no little feat."

What else remains? Wagner as Dracula, sucking out Liszt's soul. Liszt in drag, sprouting a gigantic plastic penis, which gets guillotined by a gaggle of his ex-mistresses. The Pope as a Hollywood groupie, his vestments emblazoned with film clips and ikons of Judy Garland. Liszt as Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush,* Wagner as a demented sailor in *The Perils of Paul.* The Empress Catherine of Russia in see-through Batwoman glitter. A Wagnerian monster, half-Frankenstein, half-Hitler, who threatens world domination. Gallons of blood. Incessant shrieking. Testicles and vaginas everywhere. And that's not all, folks, as the sleeve writer would say.

But why elaborate further? What Russell has managed, in *Lisztomania,* is a textbook demonstration of the fiascos that occur when a would-be artist lives, thinks and creams by Pop, then tries to apply its standards to anything more weighty than Bingo or the Hustle. The intellect crumples at the strain; craft, honesty, true imagination lose all meaning; and the only God left is sensation. Any lie, the most retarded of kindergarten japes, will do, just so long as it attracts attention. Who cares about talent? What wins out here is simply lung power.

Deepest down, this film has nothing to do with Franz Liszt, or Wagner, or the 19th century; certainly not with music, or sex, or the creative psyche. All it celebrates is the babble of a compulsive brat, 40 and fat, who cannot, will not, stop wetting his bed, because that's the only sure way to be noticed. "Look at me, I'm being so naughty," he screams, purple-faced with the effort. "Please God, won't you react?"

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Final Tribute

By Mark Goodman

In 1935, as Italian armor ground up Ethiopian spears in savage pursuit of Mussolini's dream of an African empire, Emperor Haile Selassie went before the League of Nations to plead his brutalized country's case. They did not hear him. Oh, the League righteously levied economic sanctions against Italy, a gesture that did nothing to stem the flow of guns for olive oil. Even that toothless embargo was lifted after the Lion of Judah finally fled to Palestine. Everyone felt sorry for little Ethiopia, but, after all, it was so very little and unimportant, and to confront the bumptious Mussolini would have been difficult, inexpedient. So the League did nothing, Ethiopia fell, and that, for all idealistic intent and international purpose, was that. Soon the holocaust began.

Ah, but the United Nations was going to be different. It wasn't going to be another noble failure; it would be fashioned into a noble *success:* a wonderful swift sword. Its headquarters would not be buried in the cold, neutral Swiss Alps. The U.N. building would mirror a thousand peaceful suns against the skyline of New York, nerve center of the winner and new world champion. Its General Assembly would provide a worthy forum for the airing of ideas and national aspirations. But this time, above the hot democratic hubbub of the Assembly would sit the Security Council, 15 nations strong, the Big Five as permanent members, ten other nations rotating biannually.

The U.N. was intended above all to stand as a palace of good will eternally vigilant against the recrudescence of Nazism. Thus in 1948 the U.N. established the state of Israel in Palestine. The British gratefully surrendered their mandate (I suspect that to this day officials of Her Majesty's Foreign Office arise of a morning, face the east and curse Lord Balfour to the heavens), the U.S. and Soviet Union recognized Israel and 4,000 years of bloody Biblical rivalry were hopefully settled.

Yeah, right. The shooting started the very night the blue-and-white Israeli flag was hoisted over the new land. The Palestinian wars, those foul, ferocious little wars that had never really ended, roared swiftly across the desert. They erupted again in 1956, and again in 1967 and yet again in 1973. In each case the U.N. intervened and made fum-

bling efforts to try to bring peace to burning Palestine. There were failures elsewhere, to be sure; in the Fifties Russian veto jokes became as surefire as Ed Sullivan imitations. U.S. troops only got to Korea courtesy of the Soviet absence on voting day in the Security Council—and then faced Soviet guns in the terrible Korean mountains. And the bleeding Congo was about as unmitigated as a disaster can get. But no failure hung on so desperately as the failure to secure a Mideast settlement. The fundamental problem is too obvious to belabor: A world council can only reflect the political realities of the world that created it. The League of Nations was the anemic child of a blasted civilization; the U.N. was born on a Cold War battleground. In the Mideast both organizations inherited religious and political hatreds as old as civilization. But for all the cavil and calumny and the frustration of Soviet vetoes and the plain ineffectual woollyheadedness of the League and the U.N., both organizations *did* seem well-peopled with men who could sometimes lift their eyes beyond their countries' borders and see that reason must obtain, that the world really could not be allowed to go to hell in a hand basket.

So there is something uniquely demonic about the recent developments at the U.N. On November 10, the 37th anniversary of *kristallnacht,* the dread night the Nazi storm troopers unleashed their terror on the German Jewish community, the General Assembly voted 72-35, with 32 abstensions, to declare Zionism a form of racism. Some honorable men—and nations—chose to ignore the mad resolution. Said William F. Buckley Jr., never an avatar of internationalism: "The General Assembly long ago abdicated the authority to cause uproar. Do you get mad at the Bronx Zoo?"

It was a zoo, all right, with the Arabs and communists openly buying Third World votes with peanuts of oil. Their unholy purpose was not to repudiate racism but to resurrect it, to conjur again the spirit of the death's-head ensign. It is this that signifies the beginning of the end of the U.N. to me: that the evil is now being wrought from within, not without. Here is not the work of Hitler's SS or Mussolini's Black Shirts; this Babel of war cries ancient and barbaric was raised by the Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee.

The thugs own the palace now; rats may someday scamper across broken glass from the windows that mirrored a thousand peaceful suns.●

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